

*A Centenary
History of the
Indian
National
Congress*

VOLUME III: 1935-1947

General Editor: B.N. PANDE



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A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress
(1885-1985)



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PRIME MINISTER

Foreword

SINCE ITS INCEPTION the Indian National Congress has been the voice of resurgent India. Even before the days of a mass electorate, it spoke with authority on behalf of the people of India. Its founding fathers reflected Indian public opinion at its best. They represented all the geographical regions and ethnic and religious diversities of the country. The intellectual distinction and moral eminence of leaders of the Congress like Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji, Surendranath Banerjea and Subramania Iyer were such that the people looked upon the Congress as the Parliament of the emerging Indian nation. The Congress addressed itself to basic socio-political and economic issues. Its deliberations moulded a new national public. In the early years the Congress was still a reformist rather than a revolutionary organization. But the then foreign rulers had a healthy respect for it.

Like a mountain torrent that becomes a major river on entering the plains, the Indian National Congress received tributaries from all over the country and became the established political mainstream of the land. There were few persons of standing in any part of the country who did not owe allegiance to it. After the Swadeshi Movement, its mass base widened, under the impulse of men like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai. With the end of World War I, the Rowlatt Act and Jallianwala Bagh, the pace of political change quickened. Mahatma Gandhi burst upon the nation. In Jawaharlal Nehru's words:

He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like the whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of people's minds He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of Indians, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition.

The Congress came to be *of* the people not merely *for* the people. It placed the thunderbolt of non-violent action in the hands of the deprived. Satyagraha gave giants' strength to the weak. It marked India's mental liberation and undermined the rulers' moral authority. The law was no longer what the rulers laid down but what the people were ready to accept as just.

The manner in which Mahatma Gandhi was able to enlist the participation of the people of India in days before the mass media bespoke of his political genius. Every great leader is a great persuader. The Congress under Mahatma Gandhi welded the people of India into a political entity in spite of the multiplicity of languages, in spite of illiteracy, and in spite of the colonial Government's efforts to discredit it through its loyal cadres. But Gandhiji and the Congress succeeded because they knew what causes to take up and how to relate politics to the people's needs, and the nation's value system. Above all they succeeded because the people felt convinced that the Congress had righteousness on its side, while the ruling power only had brute force.

In party-building Mahatma Gandhi followed the simple but revolutionary expedient of considering every Indian a potential member of the Congress unless that person openly distanced himself from it. No priests or chamberlains guarded the entrance. While critics schooled in European political traditions, liberal or socialist, deplored the reluctance of the Congress to build up cadres and enforce doctrinal uniformity, it is evident today that the Congress could not have become an open, inclusive party that it is, if it had made membership selective and adopted a narrow and rigid credo. So many cadre-based parties have lost their elan and the capacity for self-correction but the Congress, although less than perfect and often criticized, has exhibited a remarkable capacity for self-renewal, and for deriving inspiration and sustenance from the people of India.

In drawing the masses in, the Congress attracted gifted personalities at the pinnacle of their professions, like Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, men and women who had already made a mark, like Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, Rajagopalachari, Rajen Babu and Sarojini Naidu, and the most dynamic leaders of the younger generation, like Jawaharlal Nehru, Badshah Khan, Subhas Bose and Jayaprakash Narayan. Many humble workers came into the Congress who later became stalwarts, like Lal Bahadur Shastri and Kamaraj. Charisma called out to charisma and integrity attracted integrity. Thus it was that the people were convinced that the national movement could provide leaders superior to what the colonial system could.

At its very creation the Congress was democratic and secular. Under the influence of mass politics it also became socialist, pledged to promot-

ing the interests of the vast millions of landless and propertyless. As Jawaharlal Nehru put it at the Lucknow Congress in 1936: 'I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States systems.'

Fighting poverty, along with the abolition of untouchability, became the socio-economic programme of the Congress, even as winning freedom through non-violence was its political objective.

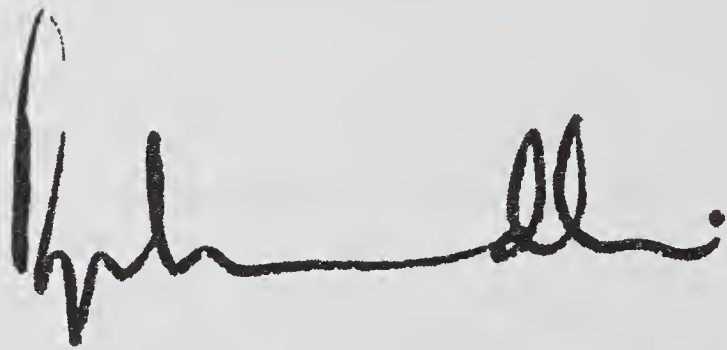
In the latter part of the twenties and throughout the thirties, Congressmen realized that they were fighting the battle not only of the people of India but of subject peoples all over the world. India had to win independence, and the entire edifice of colonialism would collapse. The Congress evolved a foreign policy which was based on our identification with the cause of freedom and equality everywhere. When World War II broke out, it was galling for India to be denied an opportunity to fight on behalf of the forces of freedom against fascism.

I am not going into the tortuous negotiations with the British and the circumstances leading to the end of imperial rule over India. I shall content myself with saying that when free India was born, it had a party with a large vision and lofty principles and a leadership of a calibre rarely seen in world history. It had an unparalleled hold on people's loyalties. Freedom could not have been consolidated and major programmes of social change through consent could not have been initiated if the Congress had thought that its work was over with the attainment of freedom. The Congress adopted a Constitution which reflected India's unity-in-diversity, and which provided for a strong Centre co-existing with thriving States. It undertook the grand task of national planning which, later under Indira Gandhi, enabled the nation to attain agricultural and industrial self-reliance.

At hundred, the Congress is young and vital. Its spirit of service and its sense of history are undimmed. Several groups have broken away from the Congress from time to time. But the Congress continues to be India's political mainstream. Freedom's battle has not ended. The causes of democracy, secularism and socialism, and of peace, coexistence and equality among the nations place continuing responsibilities on the Congress. It has to help the country to complete the unfinished revolution of technological modernization and eradication of poverty and thereby release the creative energies of India.

I think it most appropriate that as part of the Centenary celebrations, the Congress should place before the people of India, more particularly before the younger generations, a scholarly and comprehensive account

of its role in the struggle for freedom and the social and economic reconstruction of India. Such an account has more than just antiquarian interest. The past offers no simple clues to the present or the future. But a scholarly work like the *Centenary History of the Indian National Congress* has much to offer to us by way of self-perception and poise as we face the new challenges. The Congress is grateful to Shri B.N. Pande and to the distinguished galaxy of scholars who have contributed to this collective endeavour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rajiv Gandhi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

(Rajiv Gandhi)

New Delhi
October 4, 1985

Preface

ON 28 DECEMBER 1985 the Indian National Congress, the party which won freedom for India and has shaped her fortunes since 1947, celebrates its centenary. The achievements of the Congress over the past century and its potential for the future have few parallels in the history of India. For the first sixty-two years of its existence, the Congress presided over a national movement of epic proportions, which sought to transform a civilization of antiquity into a modern nation, and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the greatest imperial power known to humankind. Moreover, the party which led the people of India to independence has, thereafter, played a decisive role in shaping their moral and material destiny. Indeed, under a youthful leader of distinguished stature, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress is today poised to lead the people of India into a new phase of national creativity in the 21st century.

As the centenary of the Congress drew near, the late Shrimati Indira Gandhi initiated a scholarly project with the objective of evaluating the party's contribution to the struggle for freedom as well as to the social and economic development of India in the decades since 1947. She believed that a proper appreciation of the Congress; of the great leaders who had shaped its politics; of their ideals and the movements which they initiated; and of the central place which the Congress held in the affections of the people; were vital to the task of building a resurgent India. Shrimati Gandhi also realized the colossal magnitude of such a scholarly endeavour. It was, therefore, her desire that a comprehensive history of the Congress be written through the participation of the community of historians which had grown in India over the past few decades. Shrimati Gandhi believed that this history of the Congress should be addressed to the people as a whole. But it was to be addressed in particular to the generations which had come of age after 1947, and could, therefore, profit enormously from a recapitulation of the ideals which sustained the freedom struggle; and the sacrifices of tens upon

thousands which lay behind the emergence of India as a nation free to shape its destiny.

With this end in view the Congress (I) Working Committee appointed the Congress History Project Committee in April 1976, with Congress President as Chairman and B.N. Pande (myself) as Executive Director. It took many years in locating and collecting original documents and material. I was a bit apprehensive of the responsibility I had undertaken and of its successful execution. But with the inspiration and encouragement I received from Shrimati Gandhi and the co-operation from my distinguished colleagues and nearly fifty eminent scholars, I was able to fulfil this gigantic task of bringing out this Centenary History of the Indian National Congress, an organization with which I have had the honour and privilege of continuous association for the last 65 years, since 1920.

In planning *A Centenary History of the Indian National Congress*, we also received full support and encouragement from the Prime Minister and the President of the Congress, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, who took keen interest in the execution of this project. Shri Rajiv Gandhi's profound grasp of the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi — ideals which underpinned the struggle for freedom and informed the reconstruction of India after 1947 — are a matter of public knowledge. Also important for us was his perception of what would interest and inform the younger generations, since our scholarly labour was specially directed towards placing before them a stimulating account of the past as a clue to the present and a guide to the future.

The task of writing a comprehensive history of the Congress turned out to be a colossal one. Perhaps it would be correct to state that rarely has a scholarly undertaking of such magnitude, drawing upon the labour of close upon fifty scholars, ever been attempted before. The results of this labour are now before you. It was my privilege to oversee their preparation in the capacity of its General Editor and Chairman of its Editorial Board. We trust that the people of India, more particularly the younger generations, will find in these volumes a stimulating account of the Congress; of the struggle which led to the liberation of our country; and also of the effort which went into the task of building a new nation on the foundations of an old civilization. Perhaps our account will also provide the people with the moral sustenance which they need for resolving the problems which they face today, and the challenges which they may encounter in the years which lie ahead.

I

While it would be difficult to portray in a brief account an overview of the Congress over the past century, more particularly because this task

has been attempted by my scholarly colleagues in the accounts which follow, I would nevertheless like to highlight some of the seminal developments which constitute the substance of the *Centenary History*. It is well known that the Congress owes its genesis to the initiative of a British civilian, Allen Octavian Hume, who had over the years gained an understanding of the aspirations of the educated as well as of the popular classes. Hume posed before the intelligentsia the challenge of organizing an all-India forum, where matters of national concern could be debated, and the results of such deliberations communicated to the British Government for remedial action.

While Hume's role in organizing a national forum for the educated classes of India is well known, it would be simplistic to assume that his initiative was the solitary factor behind the genesis of the Congress. Indeed, there are two cores of political activity which need to be highlighted before we can appreciate the context in which the Congress came to life. At least half a century before Hume's initiative, the landed gentry, the commercial classes and the intelligentsia of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras had initiated a process which culminated in the birth of the Congress in 1885. The activities of these classes were reflected in the growth of the local and regional associations which mushroomed in the subcontinent in the decades under review. Even more important than this elite activity were stirrings within the popular classes — the peasantry, the tribal communities, and the working and artisan classes — some of which were articulated in the uprising of 1857. Here we touch upon social classes whose economic condition or political consciousness has been only partially explored, though their importance — they constituted the overwhelming majority of the Indian people — to the national movement hardly needs any emphasis. The aspirations of the popular classes are vividly reflected in the scholarly contributions to the *Centenary History*, since it is only through their participation in the freedom struggle that the Congress acquired the strength to dislodge British imperialism.

There is ample evidence in historical literature of the misery which the British Government inflicted upon the popular classes; and the manner in which this created in peasants, workers, artisans and tribals a sense of hostility towards the regime of imperialism. Indeed, throughout the decades under consideration, the popular classes rose repeatedly against the alien rulers, in movements of protest which are increasingly being drawn into the ambit of scholarly research. Perhaps the resistance of the peasantry to exploitation at the hands of the British Government is sensitively highlighted in numerous studies of agrarian nationalism. More dramatic were tribal uprisings against imperial exploitation, the most vivid example of which is the Santhal uprising of 1855. Within the cities of India, too, a working class had crystallized by the closing

decades of the 19th century which erupted in movements of great strength against the colonial state. As already suggested, Hume was aware of these rumblings of disaffection within the womb of Indian society, just as he also realized that a nationalist alliance between the intelligentsia and the popular classes would seriously undermine British control over India.

The delegates who assembled in Bombay on 28 December 1885, at the first annual session of the Congress, were representative of all social classes and communities which subscribed to nationalism and sought to shape a new destiny for India. Most of the delegates were drawn from the local and regional associations which had sprung to life in the preceding decades in various parts of the country. Again, most of them were lawyers, or journalists, or scholars, or men of business, or members of the landed classes, and they represented an alliance of the intelligentsia with the professional and commercial classes, on the one hand, and the landed gentry, on the other. At first blush, therefore, it would appear that the organization which came into existence in 1885 spoke only for a small fragment of the Indian nation. Yet the modest base of the Congress, when it was born in 1885, did not exhaust the social vision of its members or preclude them from reaching out to the popular classes in subsequent decades.

That the Congress looked upon itself as a political movement destined to reach out to the nation as a whole, is demonstrated by its agenda of political action and the ideology which its leaders shaped out in the next two decades. While it is true that the Congress largely concerned itself with questions affecting the interests of the middle classes, such issues did not exhaust its social concerns. Thus, while among the issues taken up for deliberation were those pertaining to the creation of representative institutions within the country, and the increasing participation of Indians in the civil service, some leaders of the Congress, like Dadabhai Naoroji and R.C. Dutt, were equally concerned about relations between Great Britain and India and the manner in which these were articulated between different classes within Indian society. Thus, Naoroji elaborated the 'Drain Theory', which demonstrated how the wealth of India was siphoned off to Great Britain; and Dutt built up a critique of the manner in which this exploitation contributed to the impoverishment of the rural classes. The social vision of the leaders of the Congress, in the first two or three decades after its creation was, therefore, not limited to the interests of the classes which flocked to its annual sessions. Indeed, they assumed responsibility for the nation as a whole, more particularly for the peasantry, even at a juncture when they were not able to reach out to the popular classes.

The concern of the leaders of the Congress for the nation, for the rich

as well as the poor, was by no means a purely abstract concern. Prominent among the youthful leaders who were drawn to the Congress at this juncture, in the first few years, were men like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Badruddin Tyabji, Anand Charlu, Vijaya-
raghavachariar, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, all below 45 years of age, who were interested in reaching out to the popular classes, and who also believed that the idiom of nationalist policies would have to be indigenized, and given a structure appropriate to the cultural traditions of India, before such a consummation could be accomplished.

While the Congress was seeking to broaden its support, the British Government decided to strike a death-blow at the party as the embodiment of nationalism. The Viceroy, Lord Curzon, believed that the Congress enjoyed the support only of the educated classes, and could easily be wiped out of existence. Yet the educated classes were causing the British Government considerable disquiet, more particularly in the Presidency of Bengal. By partitioning the presidency into smaller territorial units, Curzon sought to fatally weaken the Bengali intelligentsia and dampen the fires of nationalism in the region. The partition of Bengal was ostensibly a measure of administrative rationalization. Actually, it sought to deliver the *coup de grace* to the nationalist classes of Bengal. Nor did the intelligentsia harbour any illusions about the motivations of Curzon. Indeed, the agitation against the partition of Bengal revealed the extent to which the political activity of men like Aurobindo in Bengal; Tilak in Maharashtra; and Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh in the Punjab had disseminated nationalism among entirely new classes of Indian society. Even the moderate, Surendranath Banerjea, took offence at the insult hurled at Bengal. Needless to say, leaders like Aurobindo and Bipin Chandra Pal were much more effective than Banerjea in the anti-partition agitation, and they transformed the movement into something akin to a mass struggle in the region. Their efforts were augmented by the literary work of Rabindranath Tagore, the distinguished poet. The agitation against the partition of Bengal took the form of a movement, the so-called Swadeshi Movement, which attempted to bring about a far reaching transformation within Indian society. This movement shook the British Raj to its very foundations, and the populist support which it aggregated obliged the British Government to revoke the partition in 1911.

Beyond the 'Extremist', leaders of the Swadeshi Movement there emerged a number of revolutionary groups, whose members sought to liberate India through selective acts of violence. Such groups were often inspired by the writings of Aurobindo and Tilak, though their vision of liberation through violence differed from the vision of these two leaders. They believed that, through the assassination of key civil servants, they

could inspire the people of India to rise against British imperialism and win freedom. Needless to say, the coercive resources available to the British Government outmatched the capacity for violence of the revolutionary nationalists, with the result that, within a decade, the British were able to break up the networks of such activities. Yet, while suppressing the revolutionaries, the British Government also devised a constitutional package — the so-called Minto-Morley reforms of 1909 — to secure the co-operation of Congress leaders, Moderates and Extremists, who fought for freedom without taking recourse to violence.

The Swadeshi Movement brought about seminal changes within the Congress. Two groups, to whom we have already referred as Moderates and Extremists, popularly called *Naram Dal* and *Garam Dal*, crystallized within the party in the course of the movement. The differences between these groups, which rested upon tactics rather than upon strategy, came to a head during the annual session of the Congress at Surat in 1907. However, the developments at Surat have not been properly interpreted by the historians of the national movement. It is significant that the Surat split came about at a time when a new generation of Indians had to be drawn into nationalist politics. Perhaps the extremist leaders, men like Tilak, Pal, Lajpat Rai and Aurobindo, represented as much the aspirations of a new generation in the country as they represented the aspirations of new classes within Indian society. Such changes in leadership, as a new generation attains maturity, characterize the history of the Congress over the past century; and they explain the remarkable capacity of this party to remain in the mainstream of politics for a century. Indeed, this process of renewal highlights a strange paradox: the Congress — the oldest party in India — is also the youngest party in the country in its leadership as well as in its support base.

II

The years of World War I (1914-18) mark a seminal transformation in the leadership and support base of the Congress. When hostilities broke out in 1914, the Congress had not recovered from the split of 1907. After Surat, there were a number of attempts at bringing together Moderates and Extremists, none of them very successful. Perhaps a more significant development was the alienation of Muslim opinion from the British Government, largely as a result of the growing tension in European politics between Great Britain and Turkey, the dominant Islamic state at this stage.

The outbreak of war, however, rallied nationalist opinion in India around the defence of the British Empire. The leaders of the Congress pledged their support to Great Britain, in the belief that their plea for

political autonomy would be considered sympathetically by the British Government once hostilities come to an end. To reinforce this plea, these leaders were able to bring about substantial unity among different sections of opinion by 1916. Not only was the cleavage between Moderates and Extremists healed, but the Congress was able to persuade Muslim League leaders to jointly present to the British Government constitutional proposals seeking for India political autonomy within the British Empire.

At this juncture, a leader of epic stature staged his entry into nationalist politics in India. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had even prior to World War I attracted considerable attention through his struggle against racial bigotry in South Africa. More significantly, Gandhi had devised in the process a novel weapon of political agitation. The mahatma now sought to reshape the Congress in the image of his world-view. This is not the place to assess Satyagraha as a mode of political action and non-violence as the basis of the struggle for freedom in India. Such a task has been attempted elsewhere in the *Centenary History*. Yet a few salient facets of Gandhian ideology need to be highlighted here. Gandhi believed that all religions, shorn of ritual and cant, were capable of co-existing beneficially insofar as they sought to liberate humanity through truth and non-violence. He further believed that the social and the political domains were as valid arenas of religious activity as the spiritual domain. Indeed, the differentiation of the sacred from the profane, and the spiritual from the secular, had contributed substantively to the malaise which afflicted western society. Through equating the secular with the spiritual domain, it was possible to frame a strategy of political action which liberated the exploited at the same time as the exploiters. Within India, Gandhi believed that it was possible to conjure into existence a movement of national regeneration which would achieve the goal of swaraj at the same time as it revitalized the creative energy and reinforced the moral fibre of the people.

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, he acquainted himself, as advised by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, with nationalist politics through a dialogue with the educated classes already active in the Congress and also by undertaking an extensive tour in the country. Gandhi had built an ashram at Ahmedabad to train a cadre of satyagrahis who would devote themselves to the reconstruction of Indian society on the basis of *satya* and *ahimsa*.

Notwithstanding his experiments in the revival of hand-spinning and weaving; the removal of untouchability; and national education; Gandhi was soon drawn into the vortex of Indian politics by events which constitute decisive landmarks in the history of our freedom struggle. Within the space of a few years, he led movements of the peasantry

at Champaran and Kheda; and a strike of the textile workers of Ahmedabad. Gandhi's association with these agitations provided him with an insight into the political temper of the popular classes.

By the time the limited Satyagraha experiments of Gandhi came to a successful conclusion, World War I ended. Jawaharlal Nehru summing up the situation at the time wrote:

And the peace, instead of bringing us relief and progress, brought us repressive legislation and martial law in the Punjab. A bitter sense of humiliation and a passionate anger filled our people. All the unending talk of constitutional reform and Indianization of the services was a mockery and an insult when the manhood of our country was crushed and the inexorable and continuous process of exploitation was deepening our poverty and sapping our vitality. We had become a derelict nation.¹

At this juncture Gandhi appeared on the national scene. Describing the advent of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote:

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths; like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes; like a whirlwind that upset many things, but most of all the working of people's minds. He did not descend from the top; he seemed to emerge from the millions of India, speaking their language and incessantly drawing attention to them and their appalling condition. Get off the backs of these peasants and workers, he told us, all you who live by their exploitation; get rid of the system that produces this poverty and misery. Political freedom took new shape then and acquired a new content. . . . The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya* (fearlessness), not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. . . . But the dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear — pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear; fear of the army, the police, the widespread secret service; fear of the official class; fear of laws meant to suppress and of prison; fear of the landlord's agent; fear of the money-lender; fear of unemployment and starvation, which were always on the threshold. It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised: Be not afraid.

So, suddenly as it were, that black pall of fear was lifted from the people's shoulders, not wholly of course, but to an amazing degree. . . . It was a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psycho-analytical methods had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.

Regarding Gandhi's entry into the Congress, Jawaharlal said:

Gandhi for the first time entered the Congress organization and immediately brought about a complete change in its constitution. He made it democratic and a mass organization. Democratic it had been previously also but it had so far been limited in franchise and restricted to the upper classes. Now the peasants rolled in and, in its new garb, it began to assume the look of a vast agrarian organization with a strong sprinkling of the middle classes. This agrarian character was to grow. Industrial workers also came in but as individuals and not in their separate organized capacity.²

The manner in which Gandhi was able to draw upon the aspirations of different communities and classes, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, the rich and the poor, capitalists and workers, zamindars and kisans, professional men and the intelligentsia, artisans and tribals, constitutes the theme of a number of contributions in the *Centenary History*. I do not propose to go over the ground already covered therein. However, it would be appropriate to focus upon some of the salient features of the anti-imperialist agitations organized by Gandhi in the first half of the 20th century. The most striking aspect of these agitations was the extent to which they succeeded in uniting different elements of Indian society. That these agitations rested upon non-violence; that as a result the sentiment of nationalism crystallized in new classes and communities; are some of the features of the Gandhian movements which need to be highlighted.

III

The transformation which Mahatma Gandhi brought about in the national movement was momentous in its implications for the relationship between British imperialism and Indian nationalism, on the one hand, and between different classes and communities within Indian society, on the other. Indeed, through the ideology of non-violence, Gandhi was able to change the very nature of the discourse between Great Britain and India as well as between different constituents of Indian society.

The changes which Gandhi wrought in nationalist politics were achieved without the loss of its former sources of support, namely, the intelligentsia, the gentry and the commercial classes. Nothing illustrates this better than the fiery enthusiasm with which Jawaharlal Nehru welcomed the advent of Gandhi and accepted satyagraha as the means of India's liberation. Nehru's stance reflected that of an entire generation of young Indians, who were deeply influenced by the liberal humanism of the West and ready to accept an ideology that would effect India's liberation through drawing the downtrodden classes into the struggle for freedom. Nehru saw in the mahatma a symbol of the rural classes and an assurance of their support for the freedom struggle. His political

relationship with Gandhi was shaped most of all by the influence which the mahatma exercised over the poor and the deprived, at the same time as he stimulated the admiration of the middle classes. Gandhi's influence over the intelligentsia was inseparable from his influence over the peasantry; and this relationship constituted a crucial underpinning of the freedom struggle.

Nevertheless, in a country as large and complex as India, the non-violent agitation could not be sustained indefinitely. Thus it soon became clear that the Non-Cooperation Movement which was launched with conspicuous success in 1920-21 was running into serious trouble as a sequel to suspension of mass satyagraha followed by Gandhiji's arrest and subsequent incarceration. The Government of Turkey had already abolished the office of Khilafat leaving the Indian Muslims in a quandry. There were indications that the communities which had come together under the mahatma's leadership were finding it difficult to continue agitation against the British raj. Even more significant were the eruptions of Mopla violence in Kerala, at the same time as the peasantry fought British imperialism non-violently under the leadership of Gandhi. To the mahatma such violence was reflected most vividly in the incident at Chauri Chaura in February 1922, which prompted him to call off the planned mass Civil Disobedience. The Viceroy, Lord Reading, heaved a sigh of relief with the remark that, 'Gandhi's programme came within an inch of success.'

The suspension of mass Civil Disobedience and the arrest and imprisonment of the Mahatma in 1922 was as traumatic an experience for the leaders of the Congress as it was for the people of India. Small wonder, then, that some senior leaders, after their release from prison, put forward at this juncture an altogether new strategy for the attainment of swaraj. Prominent among them were C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, and Hakim Ajmal Khan who sought to carry the battle of nationalism into the new legislatures which had been created by the Reforms of 1919. By breaking up the constitutional machinery devised by these reforms, the Swarajists sought to demonstrate the strength of nationalism in India.

A great battle was fought at the Gaya session of the Congress in December 1922, presided over by C.R. Das. But the resolution for council entry was lost by an overwhelming majority. The Congress was divided between 'No-changers and Pro-changers'.

When Gandhi was released in 1924, he persuaded Congressmen to give full freedom to Das and the elder Nehru to carry out their experiment. He himself decided to devote all his energies to organizing a 'Constructive Programme' in order to prepare the rural mass of the people for the next satyagraha struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi had virtually retired from active leadership of the

Congress in 1925 leaving the political field to the Swaraj Party led by C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru.

The AICC in its meeting held at Patna on 22 September 1925 resolved that, 'the work in connection with the Indian and Provincial Legislatures shall be carried on in accordance with the policy and programme laid down by the Swaraj Party.'

But there was already a significant body of opinion within the Swaraj Party which had always been opposed to the tactics of obstruction in the legislatures. The body was known as the Responsive Co-operation Party and included men like M.R. Jayakar, M.S. Aney, N.C. Kelkar, B.S. Moonje and others from Maharashtra.

The Swarajists succeeded for some time, in paralyzing the functioning of the legislatures. But before long the Swarajists' position, too, became untenable due to the success of the British Government in winning over individual members of the party to its standpoint, through the promise of office. Well before the erosion of Swarajist strength became an avalanche, however, Motilal Nehru and his followers walked out of the reformed legislatures to rejoin the mainstream within the Congress.

Perhaps a more enduring solution to the impasse was provided by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru discovered that socialism lent a novel meaning to the anti-imperialist struggle which Gandhi had initiated in 1920. A crucial question was whether the freedom movement was purely a political phenomenon; or whether it also involved a redistribution of social and economic power within Indian society. The socialist answer to this question was clear. The movement was as much concerned with social and economic objectives as with the attainment of freedom. For this reason, it was not only necessary to draw the masses into the struggle for freedom, but it was also necessary to assure them social equity when freedom was attained. Moreover, the national movement in India was not an isolated phenomenon; indeed, it was a part of the wider struggle which other colonial societies in Asia and Africa were also waging against European imperialism.

The dissemination of socialist ideas proceeded apace through the crusading zeal of Jawaharlal Nehru and other youthful leaders of the Congress, prominent among whom was Subhas Chandra Bose. These leaders were able to propagate a new consciousness among the intelligentsia, the working classes, and the peasantry as to how India could be liberated and Indian society reconstituted after liberation. Jawaharlal set out this vision with striking clarity in his writings after his return from Europe at the end of 1927, where, along with his father, he had paid a visit to Soviet Russia:

What are we driving at? Freedom? Swaraj? Independence? Dominion Status? Words which may mean much or little or nothing at all? Again, . . .

whose freedom are we particularly striving for, for nationalism covers many sins and includes many a conflicting element?

Whither India? Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation. This is not such an empty idealist dream as some people imagine. It is within the range of the practical politics of today and the near future. We may not have it within our grasp but those with vision can see it emerging on the horizon. And even if there be delay in the realization of our goal, what does it matter if our steps march in the right direction and our eyes look steadily in front. For in the pursuit itself of a mighty purpose there is joy and happiness and a measure of achievement. . . .³

The Madras Congress in 1927 authorized its President M.A. Ansari to appoint an All-Party Committee to draft a constitution for India. Ansari appointed this committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru.

The report of the Nehru Committee was discussed at a conference in Lucknow in August 1928, and again in the All-Parties Convention in Calcutta in December 1928. In both places, it was evident that there were serious differences of opinion between different parties; yet all had tried to accommodate one another to the utmost in order to present an agreed solution.

Muslim separatism was by now firmly entrenched and cast its shadow over other sections of the population. Youth showed signs of drifting away, either to the Left or to a negation of non-violence, which was, with Gandhi, a creed, but with most Congressmen only a policy.

The first All-India Socialist Youth Congress was held in Calcutta on 27 December 1928 under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Several resolutions were passed, one of which is given below:

In the opinion of this Congress complete Independence and not Dominion Status is the immediate political objective of India not as an ideal but as the necessary preliminary to a communistic society and rejects altogether the Nehru Committee Report for the following among other principles, viz.:

That it allows the bourgeoisie to compromise with the British Imperialists by establishing the so-called Dominion Status which involves the safeguard of the vested interests, landowning, feudal and capitalist, and sacrifice the interests of the masses.⁴

Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose raised the demand of complete independence as the objective of the Congress. Gandhi, Motilal and other senior Congress leaders were sympathetic to this demand, but, for tactical reasons, they offered the British Government the space of a year to accept constitutional package which they had

fashioned in 1928, and which called for Dominion Status as the basis of India's position within the British Empire. But when the British Government turned a deaf ear to this demand, the Congress, under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, at the historic session at Lahore in December 1929, approved of *purna swaraj* as the objective of a renewed struggle which was to be launched under the direction and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

As proposed by the Congress Working Committee, Mahatma Gandhi had met the viceroy on 23 December 1930, prior to the Lahore session of the Congress, with the object of giving him an ultimatum, calling for acceptance of the Calcutta Congress demand failing which civil disobedience would be launched. But a day earlier, an attempt was made to blow off the railway coach in which the viceroy was travelling to Delhi. Luckily he escaped. Earlier, a bomb had been thrown into the chamber of Central Assembly. In fact, since the arrival of Simon Commission and the death of Lala Lajpat Rai, as a result of police lathi blows, the political atmosphere was surcharged with violence.

Commenting on the series of violent events Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

Take now the positive side of the argument. When, that is in 1920, non-violence came to be a part of the Congress creed the Congress became a transformed body as if by magic. Mass awakening came no one knows how. Even remote villages were stirred. Many abuses seemed to have been swept away. The people became conscious of their power. They ceased to fear authority. The system of *begar* (forced labour) vanished like mist in Almora and several other parts of India, wherever the people had become awakened to a sense of the power that lay within themselves. Such as it was, it was their freedom that they had attained by their own strength. . . . It was true Swaraj of the masses attained by the masses. If the march of non-violence had not been interrupted by events culminating in Chauri Chaura, I make bold to say that we would have been today in full possession of Swaraj.

Giving a warning against violence Mahatma said:

We are now entering upon a new era. Our immediate objective and not our distant goal is complete independence. Is it not obvious that if we are to evolve the true spirit of independence amongst the millions, we shall only do so through non-violence and all it implies? It is not enough that we drive out Englishmen by making their lives insecure through secret violence. That would lead not to independence but to utter confusion. We can establish independence only by adjusting our differences through an appeal to the head and the heart, by evolving organic unity amongst ourselves, not by terrorizing or killing those who, we fancy, may impede our march, but by patient and gentle handling, by converting the oppo-

ment, we want to offer mass civil disobedience. Everybody owns that it is a certain remedy. Everybody understands that 'civil' here means strictly non-violent, and has it not often been demonstrated that mass civil disobedience is an impossibility without mass non-violence and without mass discipline? Surely it does not require an appeal to our religious faith to convince us that the necessity of our situation, if nothing else, demands non-violence of the limited type I have indicated. Let those who are not past reason then cease either secretly or openly to endorse activities such as this latest bomb outrage. Rather let them openly and heartily condemn these outrages, so that our deluded patriots may, for want of nourishment to their violent spirit, realize the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activity has every time done.⁵

For the attainment of *purna swaraj* Gandhi pointed out that:

The greatest and the most effective sanction, however, is civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. Whilst the task of choosing the time and the method of it has been nominally and properly left to the All-India Congress Committee to decide, I know that it is a duty primarily devolving upon me. I must confess that I do not see the atmosphere for it today. I want to discover a formula whereby sufficient provision can be made for avoiding suspension by reason of Chauri Chaura. A time must come when there may be a fight to the finish with one's back to the wall. . . . I can only give the impatient patriot the assurance, that I am concentrating all my powers on discovering a workable formula. He can help me materially by assisting to promote a non-violent atmosphere and to push forward the constructive programme. I know that many have refused to see any connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience. But for one who believes in non-violence it does not need hard thinking to realize the essential connection between the constructive programme and civil disobedience for Swaraj. . . . For such an indefinable thing as Swaraj people must have previous training in doing things of all-India interest. Such work must throw together the people and their leaders whom they would trust implicitly. Trust begotten in the pursuit of continuous constructive work becomes a tremendous asset at the critical moment. Constructive work, therefore, is for a non-violent army what drilling etc. is for an army designed for bloody warfare. Individual civil disobedience among an unprepared people and by leaders not known to or trusted by them is of no avail, and mass civil disobedience is an impossibility.⁶

The breaking of the Salt Law began on 12 March 1930, when Gandhi started on a 241-mile trek from Sabarmati towards the sea with a band of 79 associates. Careful preparations were made all over India for breach of this law, as well as of ordinances prohibiting peaceful processions and peaceful picketing of shops dealing in liquor or in foreign cloth. The whole of India watched with bated breath; and when the signal was given by Gandhi's symbolic breach of the Salt Law on the seashore on 6

April 1930, the whole country plunged into the campaign with unexampled enthusiasm.

The success was phenomenal. There was hardly any breach of non-violent discipline, and, altogether, during the duration of the campaign, nearly a hundred thousand of people suffered imprisonment, while during the Non-cooperation Movement the number had been of the order of 30,000.

An important feature of the Salt Satyagraha was an audacious step designed by Gandhi during the later stages of the campaign. When the government had almost settled down into the routine programme of imprisoning volunteers, or of manhandling them and a kind of stalemate seemed to have overtaken the campaign, Gandhi altered his tactics. In order to invite the government to do its worst, he designed 'non-violent raids' on the salt godowns of Dharasana and Wadala.⁷ The invitation to the government was now, not merely to imprison, but also to shoot.

However, in the face of these tactics, the government did not actually shoot, but took measures to beat off the advancing satyagrahis. Shooting satyagrahis who were unarmed, and in the sight of numerous European and American newspapermen who had come to witness the strange scene, would have lowered their reputation considerably. And this is something they were anxious to avoid. But where conditions could be controlled by military censors, there was no dearth of situations where British soldiers did not hesitate to shoot straight with the intention to kill.⁸

The movement gained countrywide momentum and obliged the British Government to bring into full play the instruments of repression at its command. Yet a movement which defied the British raj non-violently seriously weakened the fabric of British rule over India, and undermined the morale of the civil services which were the instruments of this rule. Indeed, the British Government was under such enormous pressure that the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, invited Gandhi for negotiations in a bid to buy peace. The incorrigible Winston Churchill voiced the distress of an entire generation of Tory imperialists when he expressed his disgust at the spectacle of 'the half naked faqir' parleying with Irwin. These negotiations led to a truce, under which Irwin persuaded the Mahatma to participate in discussions in Great Britain designed to shape a new constitution for India.

As was expected, Gandhi was unable to gain much from the Round Table Conference held in London in 1931, and he landed back at Bombay empty-handed. His prominent colleagues Jawaharlal Nehru, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and others had already been arrested and imprisoned. The Congress Working Committee advised their countrymen to launch

mass civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. Gandhi was arrested on 4 January 1932 and this was followed by countrywide resumption of mass civil disobedience. More than a hundred thousand satyagrahis were arrested. Lathi charges and firing became the order of the day. The non-violent struggle continued for over two years. In UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh it took the form of no-rent satyagraha where thousands of peasants were dispossessed of their land.

The British response to 1932-3 Civil Disobedience Movement was a new constitution which was adopted in 1935. This constitution marks an important stage in the growth of the national movement, although we are unable to endorse the view of some historians that the Act of 1935 was a statesmanlike initiative on the part of the British Government. According to these scholars, the constitution of 1935 reflected the recognition by the British Government of three articulate political forces in India; the great body of Hindu opinion organized under the aegis of the Congress; the minorities, more particularly the Muslim and the untouchable communities, which stood outside the framework of the Congress; and the Princely States, whose subjects were largely untouched by the leaven of nationalism. The Act of 1935, these historians further argue, brought together the three discordant forces into an effective polity. Our perception of the constitution of 1935 differs radically from that of such scholars. The federal polity envisaged by the constitution, so we believe, was an instrument designed to provide British control over India with a durable basis. It sought to do so through creating a federal government subject to imperial control, while nationalism expended itself in managing the autonomous provinces of British India.

Although the leaders of the Congress had serious reservations about the Act of 1935, they decided, after some initial hesitation, to contest the elections to the provincial legislatures held under its aegis, if only to demonstrate the support they enjoyed with the popular classes. Indeed, both the strength and the weaknesses of the Congress were fully demonstrated by the provincial elections of 1937. In six provinces of British India, which had a Hindu majority, Congress candidates won clear victories. In the rest, where the Muslims had a majority, or constituted a very substantial proportion of the population, the majority of votes went, not to the Muslim League but to regional parties which did not fully accept the policies of the Congress.

The problems facing the provincial Congress governments which came to power in 1937 were by no means easy of resolution. So far as the British Government was concerned, it welcomed official acceptance by the Congress as a means of persuading that body to expend its energies in the provincial arena, from where (so the British believed) it had little

prospect of contesting the over-arching dominance of imperial power. For the principal leaders of the Congress — Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad and Rajendra Prasad — the behaviour of the provincial Congress governments was a test of the ability of the provincial nationalist leaders to keep their strategic objectives firmly in focus while at the same time working to redeem their election pledges to the people.

The outbreak of war in 1939 did not catch the leaders of the Congress wholly unprepared. Since the time Jawaharlal Nehru had visited Europe in 1927, to attend an anti-imperialist conference, he had maintained contact with the socialist leaders of Europe as well as with the leaders of liberation movements elsewhere in Asia and Africa. He had also watched with concern the growth of fascism in Italy and in Germany. Repeatedly, in the course of the 1930s, the Congress adopted resolutions condemning the passivity of the capitalist democracies — particularly Great Britain and France — in the face of increasing fascist aggression in Europe and elsewhere. The Congress, as the representative of the people of India, not only distanced itself from the policy of appeasement pursued by Great Britain and France in the 1930s, but it also expressed sympathy for the victims of fascist terror. The leaders of the Congress believed, however, that the people of India could not participate in any war between the capitalist democracies and the fascist powers, until they were liberated, and joined an anti-fascist alliance as a *free* rather than as an *enslaved* people.

In view of the Congress stance upon the issue of war, the decision of the British Government to declare India a belligerent power in September 1939 was a serious mistake. To demonstrate their resentment of this step, the Congress ministries in the provinces where the party had won a majority in 1937 tendered their resignations. After this gesture of disapproval, the Congress leaders reviewed the national and the international scene, in order to devise an appropriate programme of political action. The situation was, of course, an exceedingly complex one. Prominent leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru looked upon Nazi Germany with extreme hostility; and they did not want to embark upon any step which would weaken the anti-fascist struggle in Europe. At the same time, Subhas Chandra Bose was aiming to liberate India with the help of the fascist powers. Besides, a majority within the Congress believed that popular sentiment for decisive action against British imperialism could not be lightly brushed aside. Above all others stood Mahatma Gandhi, second to none in his opposition to fascism, acutely sensitive to opinion within India, yet firmly opposed to wars, as wars failed to solve the problems which caused them.

The reconciliation of these differing viewpoints was no easy matter.

The Congress leadership decided to demand from the British Government a declaration of its war aims, more particularly as they applied to subject nations like India. When, in August 1940, the British Government replied through a statement which sought to exploit cleavages within Indian society, the leaders of the Congress realized that the time for action had arrived. In December 1940, therefore, they initiated yet another non-violent campaign against British imperialism; though in deference to the anti-fascist war in progress in Europe, this campaign was to be fought through individual rather than collective satyagraha.

In the meanwhile the fortunes of war turned increasingly against Great Britain in Europe as well as in Asia. After the fall of Poland, Nazi Germany turned westwards to vanquish France. Japan, too, took this opportunity to establish her supremacy over Southeast Asia. First Indo-China, then Indonesia and Malaysia, and finally Burma fell into the hands of the Japanese armies. By the spring of 1942, the Japanese stood on the frontiers of India, seemingly poised for an invasion of the subcontinent.

The prospect of a Japanese invasion obliged both the British Government and the Congress to reformulate their stances towards each other. Not surprisingly, there were some differences among the Congress leaders as to the manner in which the situation was to be handled. Gandhi, despite his opposition to Japanese fascism, was not willing to advocate violent methods to defend the integrity of India. So far as the mahatma was concerned, the country could best be defended through a scorched earth policy and mass non-cooperation against the Japanese invaders. On the other hand, Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad wanted to actively organize the people for the armed defence of the country against a possible Japanese invasion. Notwithstanding these differences, all nationalist leaders wanted the British to leave India and thus enable her people to defend their country and contribute to the global struggle against fascism. The British Government, on its part, looked upon the prospect of a Japanese invasion of India with alarm, more particularly, if they had to contend simultaneously with a hostile population in the subcontinent. The British were also being urged by President Roosevelt to draw nationalist forces in India into the war effort against fascism through a policy of concessions. As a result of this, the Imperial Government sent Stafford Cripps to India in an attempt to persuade the leaders of the Congress to participate in the anti-fascist struggle, on the basis of an assurance that India would be granted freedom after the conclusion of hostilities. However, Cripps brought with him proposals which laid the door open for the balkanization of the subcontinent. The leaders of the Congress, therefore, treated these proposals as wholly unacceptable.

While the Cripps' proposals were rejected, popular sentiment for a determined assault upon British imperialism ran extremely high. As a result of this, the leaders of the Congress adopted, at a crucial session in Bombay in August 1942, a resolution demanding that the British quit India. The 'Quit India' resolution signified the grim determination of the Congress to embark upon a life and death struggle for the liberation of India. The British Government, however, was equally determined to be tough and ruthless. All the senior Congress leaders in Bombay were put under arrest, and similar arrests were carried out in the provincial cities and district towns.

Mahatma Gandhi had warned the people that Quit India Movement would be short and swift. There would be mass participation of the people. Each one would be his or her own guide. The government would resort to brutal and ruthless repression. People would have to face the challenge non-violently, in a spirit of 'Do or Die'.

The arrest of the Congress leaders triggered off a massive popular upsurge throughout India. In all the metropolitan cities, provincial capitals and district towns the people rose in revolt against the British Government. In large parts of India the centres of British administrative power were overthrown and, for the space of a few weeks, British rule ceased to exist. Indeed, non-violent means succeeded in establishing parallel administrations in some districts in Bengal, U.P., Orissa and Maharashtra. The British raj seemed to be in real danger of being overthrown.

Despite the initial success of the Quit India Movement, the British Government succeeded, through prompt use of the armed forces at its disposal in quelling the popular uprising. Just before this rising, the British had deployed substantial forces on the Indo-Burmese border to check a possible Japanese invasion. During August and September 1942, approximately ninety per cent of these forces were redeployed to quell the popular upsurge against the British raj. The suppression of the uprising of 1942 was as brutal an affair as the suppression of the uprising of 1857. Thousands of unarmed Satyagrahis were shot down and tens of thousands were incarcerated in British prisons. By the end of the year, the peace of the graveyard prevailed over India, bearing mute testimony to a mighty struggle for freedom on the part of the people, as well as to the ferocity with which the British Government had quelled it.

For the next two years, as all its leaders of any importance were in prison, there was no organized agitation on the part of the Congress. In the meanwhile, largely because of the reverses which the Nazi armies suffered in the Soviet Union, the fortunes of war tilted in favour of the Allied powers. On 6 June 1944, a joint US-British Expeditionary Force landed in Normandy, and gradually pushed back the Nazi armies.

Within a year, Germany faced an invasion by Soviet armies from the east and Anglo-American armies from the west. It was clear that the collapse of Hitler's Reich was merely a matter of time. One of the most horrifying wars in human history thus concluded in the west in victory for the forces of socialism and democracy in the world.

The triumph of socialism and democracy over fascism greatly strengthened the national movement in India. In the summer of 1945, the British people elected the Labour Party to power. The leaders of this party, men like Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps and Lord Pethick Lawrence, were inclined to take a sympathetic view of Indian aspirations. Perhaps their altruism was also related to the strength of the national movement in India under the leadership of the Congress. Indeed, it was clear to the Labour government that it could hold on to India only through brute force, a prospect which was unlikely to be endorsed by the war-weary people of Great Britain.

However, the task of disengagement from India was one beset with serious difficulties. As suggested earlier, the British always sought to maintain overarching control, even after provincial autonomy had been conferred upon the country. To realise this objective, the British had extended support to the minorities as well as to the Princely States. When they surveyed the Indian scene in 1945 and 1946, they discovered that the support they had extended to the minorities, particularly to the Muslims, had created a powerful entity in the Muslim League under the leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. The strength of this party lay in the religious passions which it stirred up in the country; and through exploiting the sentiment of communalism, the League was able to win a majority of Muslim seats in the election of 1946. Although the strength of the League rested upon a consciousness which held no place in a modern polity, it nevertheless conferred upon Jinnah a powerful position in the constitutional deliberations. Indeed, the elections of 1946 were a prelude to the partition of the country.

The British Government made one last bid through a Cabinet Mission to hammer out proposals seeking to create a three-tiered polity with a confederal centre at New Delhi. The details of this scheme and the reaction which it evoked in different circles constitute the subject of an important chapter in the *Centenary History*. Suffice it to mention here that the Cabinet Mission proposals satisfied neither the leaders of the Congress nor those of the League. Perhaps the Congress leaders, with their commitment to a centralized polity in India, feared that a confederal constitution would be merely a prelude to the balkanization of the subcontinent.

To resolve the dilemma, Clement Attlee appointed Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India with plenipotentiary powers to resolve the constitu-

tional impasse. The new viceroy assumed office with a great reputation for dynamism and tact in negotiations. Moreover, during his tenure as the Supreme Commander of Allied forces in South-East Asia, he had gained a sensitive insight into the strength of Asian nationalism. In a short span of time, he was able to establish relations of confidence with the leaders of the Congress and other parties. Mountbatten put before the Indian leadership a plan for the partition of India and the creation of two autonomous dominions from the provinces of British India. The 563 Princely States, needless to say, were free to opt for union with either of these two dominions. The Mountbatten Plan, as it is popularly known, was a bitter pill for the Congress leaders to swallow; since from the very outset they fervently believed in the unity of the country. However, it became clear to Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others that the price of independence was the partition of the country. On 3 June 1947, therefore, the leaders of the Congress signalled their acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan, whereby two new dominions were to come into existence on 15 August 1947.

On the midnight of 14 August, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke in the Constituent Assembly of the prospect before the new nation: 'Long years ago', he stated, 'we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the services of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.'

IV

15 August 1947 marked the culmination of one phase and the commencement of another in the history of modern India. After a long struggle against British imperialism, the leaders of the Congress had succeeded in creating an independent polity in India. The struggle for freedom was a popular movement, in which hundreds of thousands of men and women, drawn from different classes and communities, had fought for the liberation of the sub-continent. But the dawn of freedom also brought its share of tragedy. Since its genesis in 1885, the Congress had stood above all for the unity of India. Yet the full realization of this ideal eluded the Congress during the final years of the British raj. The provincial elections of 1946 had made it clear that, with some exceptions, Muslim communities in the north-west and north-east were unwilling to support the vision of a united India. As a result of this, two sovereign

dominions, India and Pakistan, emerged through the vivisection of British India in August 1947.

The historical literature on the national movement offers a number of explanations for the partition of the subcontinent. We do not propose to review this literature in the present context. Suffice it to mention here that the ethnic diversity of India, and the differing worldviews of the religious communities in the subcontinent, were among the factors which contributed to this phenomenon. Yet, any review of weaknesses in the social fabric of India does not fully explain the birth of Pakistan. Nor is partition to be explained wholly through the exploitation of such cleavages by the British. That the British Government exploited weaknesses in the social fabric to reinforce its position can be readily conceded. However, what the British desired above all was enduring economic and strategic control over the subcontinent, as a unified polity, rather than its break-up into two autonomous states. Nevertheless, the support which the British Government extended to the leaders of the Muslim League, with the objective of weakening nationalism, created a situation which resulted in the break-up of British India into the dominions of India and Pakistan in August 1947.

Whatever be the reasons behind the partition of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the Prime Minister of the Dominion of India, faced problems of terrifying magnitude as a result of it when he assumed office on 15 August. The most pressing of these was the problem of communal strife, resulting in the dislocation of tens of millions of people in the subcontinent. Even prior to August 1947, Jinnah had incidentally mentioned the possibility of exchange of populations between India and Pakistan. But the numbers that would be involved in such an exchange were so enormous that no one considered this possibility seriously.

However, there was such bitter hostility between Hindus and Muslims after August 1947, that Hindus trapped in the provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in Pakistan; and Muslims residing in the state of East Punjab (India); found it impossible to live with dignity in the new dominions where they constituted minorities. The bitter communal warfare forced millions of Hindus and Sikhs to migrate to India; and similarly, millions of Muslims left India to take shelter in the new dominion of Pakistan. The energies of the two infant states, India and Pakistan, in the first few months after their creation, were fully stretched in order to rehabilitate the refugees who sought shelter within their frontiers.

Perhaps nobody felt the tragedy of communal warfare more keenly than Mahatma Gandhi. Indeed, the last phase of his life was devoted wholly to the task of persuading Hindus and Muslims, in India and in Pakistan, to live peacefully with each other. The mahatma's martyrdom, on 30 January 1948, at the hands of a communal fanatic, was his last and

greatest offering at the altar of communal harmony. Thus ended the epic life of the greatest Indian since the Buddha. We are so near to the mahatma in time, that it is not easy for us to assess his true stature; or to evaluate his place in history. Nevertheless, the leadership which he offered to the people of India, in their struggle against British imperialism, places him among the truly outstanding figures of the 20th century. Nor were his activities confined to the political domain. By articulating the traditional values of Indian civilization in the changing context of the 20th century, he provided the people of India with the moral and cultural resilience without which they would have found it difficult to acquire a new national identity. Small wonder, then, that he is widely regarded as the father of the Indian nation.

With the martyrdom of the mahatma, and the consequent stilling of communal passions, the way was open for the adoption of a new constitution by the people of India. Yet before this could be done, some crucial issues had to be resolved: What would be the structure of the polity in New Delhi? How would this be related to the provincial governments? What was the place which the erstwhile Princely States would occupy in the new order? How would rights of property and individual liberties be defined in the proposed constitution? How, once again, would the great minorities be drawn into a creative relationship with the major community in the subcontinent? These were some of the questions which were debated in the Constituent Assembly before it framed a new political system. India, it was decided, was to be a republic resting upon adult franchise; and the citizen would enjoy rights and bear responsibilities comparable to his rights and obligations under other liberal constitutions. The structure of governance in New Delhi was to be unitary. Yet the founding fathers recognized that a polity of India's complexity required centres of governance in the provinces (or the states, as they were now termed) no less powerful than the one envisaged in New Delhi. The new constitution, therefore, envisaged governments in the states which were endowed with substantial powers as well as considerable resources. The sagacity of the constitution framers is amply reflected in the fact that India is a functioning democracy in 1985, with a record of elections which have enabled the people to exercise free choice in determining who should preside over the government.

The constitution of India has many novel features, but the most striking feature is the right of franchise it bestows on every adult in the country. The first general elections held under the new constitution, in 1952, were to a great leap into the dark. Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress leaders, although they presided over a party which had been the principal force behind the freedom struggle, had little indication of how they would fare electorally. A number of parties, ranging from the Hindu

Mahasabha to the Communist Party, had jumped into the fray. The leaders of the Congress were apprehensive that the parties of the right, which were inclined to appeal to the electorate on the basis of religious sentiment, would offer the most formidable challenge. However, the results of the election showed that, although communalism was far from dead, economic issues — the problems of poverty and social deprivation — would henceforth loom large upon the political horizon. The Congress secured 354 seats out of 469 in the Lok Sabha, and also won majorities in all the states. The most powerful opposition groups were the parties of the left, which offered radical (to the point of being impractical) solutions to the people's problems.

The results of the first general elections made it clear to Jawaharlal Nehru that the crucial issue before the country was the economic reconstruction of society along lines which would ensure a measure of material dignity and social equity to the humblest in the land.

The radical policies, which Jawaharlal Nehru now initiated, had been anticipated in the industrial policy resolution of 1948, wherein the state proclaimed its decision to control the 'commanding heights of the economy' through reserving for itself some of the seminal areas of economic activity, like the fabrication of steel, the generation of power, and the establishment of a machine tool industry. To give practical shape to this policy, Jawaharlal instituted a Planning Commission, which was vested with the responsibility of devising an overall economic strategy for India. The crux of planning, as it developed in India over the next few years, related to the creation of a publicly owned heavy industry sector, around which core the planners contemplated the growth of consumer industries, through the initiative of private capital; and the growth also of handicrafts, through the enterprise of small scale producers.

By the middle of the 1960s, Jawaharlal Nehru had brought about remarkable changes in the industrial and agrarian economy of India. Behind these changes stood a party which had been greatly strengthened as an instrument of social transformation.

The continuing popularity of the Congress was vividly reflected in the second general elections held in 1957. As before, the Congress secured a massive victory at the polls, winning 366 out of 483 seats in the Lok Sabha. Through the support which they extended to Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress, the people of India firmly endorsed the progressive measures which had been initiated with the object of creating a modern industrial and agricultural economy. All this was reaffirmed at the Avadi session of the Congress, where a solemn decision was taken to build a socialist order in India.

Besides the social and economic reforms which he initiated within India, Jawaharlal Nehru also strove to place the country's relations with

the world community on a durable basis. Even before 1947, he had attempted to establish a link between the liberation movement of India and those of other colonial societies in Asia and Africa. For what is now termed the Third World to take its rightful place in the international community, Jawaharlal Nehru believed that it needed a world-view of its own; and India, with her classical heritage so eloquently rearticulated in the 20th century by Mahatma Gandhi, could contribute substantially to the shaping of a distinctive ethos for the resurgent nations of Asia and Africa. The concept of non-alignment, the belief that it was incumbent upon developing countries to reflect their distinctive personality in a world polarized between the capitalist and the socialist blocs, grew out of such considerations. These ideas attracted wide support from the people of India; and they were destined to become a powerful force in international relations during the next few decades.

In reflecting upon the human condition in the 1950s, Jawaharlal Nehru felt that some of the perennial problems of war and peace had acquired a new urgency because of the existence of nuclear weapons. Wars had been accepted earlier as a legitimate means of resolving human problems. But it was no longer valid to do so. 'Thus, violence cannot possibly lead today to a solution of any major problem because violence has become much too terrible and destructive,' Jawaharlal Nehru observed. 'The moral approach to the question [of war or peace] has now been powerfully reinforced by the practical aspect.'¹⁰ In this area, India had a special message for the rest of humanity. The Mahatma had initiated a great transformation within Indian society through non-violence; but there was reason to believe that problems between sovereign states, too, could be resolved through the ideology of non-violence.

The vision of the world community which Jawaharlal delineated with such sensitivity guided in particular India's relations with China. Like India, China had gone through the experience of exploitation by imperialism. Over and above this experience, there were longstanding ties which linked the civilization of India with that of China. For these reasons, Jawaharlal Nehru strove to establish relations of utmost cordiality with China. Perhaps the issue of Tibet was the first testing ground for the two great nations of Asia. Jawaharlal reacted to the assumption by China of control over Tibet with rare magnanimity. He also seized the opportunity to lay down the five principles of co-existence between sovereign states, which became the fundamental basis of the non-aligned movement.

Despite Jawaharlal Nehru's generosity towards China over Tibet, his gesture was probably interpreted as a sign of weakness, if not worse. For, soon afterwards, the Chinese Government started putting forward

the most extraordinary claims upon Indian territories along the Himalayas. These claims were backed by the armed intervention of Chinese troops; and in Ladakh, the Chinese built a strategic highway which made a serious encroachment upon Indian territory. The earlier 'cartographic aggression' of China had dealt a blow to the friendly relations which Jawaharlal Nehru had tried to build with Peking over the years. Nevertheless, the government and the people of India took the view that the border problem could be resolved through peaceful negotiations. But the Chinese Government obviously thought otherwise. In the autumn of 1962, Chinese armies suddenly struck across the Himalayan border and seized hold of thousands of square kilometres of Indian territory.

The Chinese invasion of India was as humiliating as it was unexpected. Yet Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress and the people of India emerged from the ordeal stronger than ever. This was largely due to the manner in which different classes and communities came together at their country's hour of peril. A united nation set about the task of repairing the damage wrought by the military reverses along the Himalaya; and in a matter of a few months, India had recovered fully from the shock which it sustained in the winter of 1962.

Jawaharlal Nehru's health was now well past its prime. Yet he turned to the task of revitalizing the Congress, and making it an instrument for the social transformation of India, with a zeal that would have done credit to a statesman half his age. During the last year of his life he held out once again the message of socialism before the people of India. Only through socialism could India realize material prosperity at the same time as she achieved equity for the poor and the deprived. Under his inspiring leadership, the Congress turned anew to the task of eradicating poverty and building a strong and self-reliant nation.

On 27 May 1964, Jawaharlal Nehru passed away, deeply mourned by the people of India and indeed by mankind as a whole. His achievements over a life of seven decades and more were truly remarkable. As a fiery young nationalist, he had joined the Congress and participated in the freedom struggle under the aegis of Mahatma Gandhi. Yet he soon outgrew the influence of the mahatma and, by disseminating socialism among the members of the Congress, he radically transformed the ideological climate of the national movement. Indeed, when India was liberated in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru's socialist vision became the basis of a programme for transforming India into a modern industrial society, in which economic growth was married with social equity in finely balanced proportions. In the history of India, Jawaharlal Nehru stands among those rare statesmen who strove to bring about an epic change in the country. His commitment to the cause of peace, in a world

threatened with nuclear devastation, was perhaps unrivalled among international statesmen who were his contemporaries.

V

The death of Jawaharlal Nehru removed a towering figure from the stage of Indian politics. Yet the Congress proved itself fully worthy of the trust which the nation reposed in it by electing Lal Bahadur Shastri, a politician with wide experience, as the new prime minister. The problem of succession rarely lends itself to easy resolution; and the manner in which the Congress tackled the issue demonstrated the maturity which it had attained within a brief span of time as a ruling party.

Nevertheless, the tasks which awaited resolution at the hands of Lal Bahadur Shastri were truly formidable, both in their magnitude and in their complexity. Within the country, the programmes of social and economic development initiated by his predecessor needed to be revitalized, if the dream of a self-sufficient India was to be realized. Outside the country, a hostile China and an unfriendly Pakistan promised turbulent weather ahead for the new prime minister. Yet the choice of Lal Bahadur Shastri was fully vindicated by the purposeful manner in which he tackled the problems facing the nation. At the outset, Shastri proclaimed his commitment to the principles of socialism which had informed the Congress since the 1930s; and which inspired the domestic as well as the foreign policies of Jawaharlal Nehru. Next, the prime minister turned to the vital task of generating a new vigour in rural society. It appeared that, despite the land reforms of the 1950s, the rural economy needed a new boost if agricultural production was to suffice for the growing population of the country. Shastri took the first tentative steps towards initiating a new strategy of rural development, which reached fruition under his successor, and became the basis of a regime of plenty in the land.

While Shastri was battling to resolve the economic problems which faced the country, Pakistan decided to strike a deadly blow at India. The rulers of Pakistan, taking their cue from China, advanced claims to Indian territory in Gujarat and initiated military action to realize these claims. However, it soon became clear that the manoeuvre in Gujarat was merely a diversionary tactic. In the autumn of 1965, Pakistan initiated military aggression against Kashmir with a view to conquering it. Shastri, with full support from the Congress and the people, demonstrated to all and sundry that India would fight with all the resources at its command to defend its territorial integrity. The Indian armies not only counter-attacked in Kashmir but, to seize the initiative from Pakistan, executed a limited military move across the Punjab border. This

move succeeded in halting the aggression by Pakistan and, after a brief period of hostilities, both the countries agreed to a cease-fire.

The military action of 1965 was a great triumph for Shastri, for the Congress and for the people of India. Pakistan had struck at a moment when India appeared to be weak. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Shastri and the Congress, the people of India demonstrated their ability to withstand aggression, whatever be its point of origin. After the cessation of hostilities, a number of countries offered their good offices to India and Pakistan. But the leaders of the two countries considered it appropriate to accept Soviet mediation. The Tashkent conference flowed from this acceptance; and an agreement was worked out at this conference satisfactory to all concerned. While the people of India were preparing to extend a hero's welcome to Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had grown enormously in popular esteem, they learnt of his sudden demise at Tashkent on 10 January 1966.

VI

The death of Lal Bahadur Shastri once again posed before the Congress, and the people of India, the question of succession to the office of prime minister. Rarely had a party been called upon to resolve the leadership issue twice in so brief a span of time. Yet the leaders of the Congress proved themselves fully capable of handling this difficult situation. However, unlike in 1964, certain differences soon became evident in the party as to who should succeed Shastri. Some of the leaders of the Congress, particularly those inclined to a conservative view of politics, looked upon Morarji Desai as the most appropriate choice. As against this, a very large section of the radical leaders favoured the candidature of Indira Gandhi, who had demonstrated remarkable political skills as President of the Congress in 1959. The leadership of the Congress in 1966, therefore, was contested between Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai, and the former won the election with a comfortable margin.

Although Indira Gandhi had a majority of the Congress behind her in 1966, the conservative leaders who had backed Morarji Desai did not give up the contest for supremacy. Between her election to supreme office in 1966 and the general elections of 1967, Indira Gandhi faced a number of challenges to her position as the leader of the party and the nation. The divided state in which the party went to the polls in 1967 was also reflected in the results of the election. In contrast to the comfortable majorities which the Congress had won in the first three elections held after independence, it secured only 280 out of 523 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1967.

The strength of the Congress in the post-1967 Lok Sabha enabled it to

function as the party in power. Yet it was clear to Indira Gandhi and her supporters that the situation called for radical measures. A new bond of trust and confidence had to be forged between the people and the Congress if the country was to sustain the progress which it had achieved during the first decade and a half of independence. The forging of such a link called for a consummation which would carry the transformation of Indian society to a new qualitative level. Substantial sections of society — the tribal and Harijan communities; the poorer sections of the peasantry; the industrial working class and the artisan communities; and the minorities — had profited only marginally from the economic growth which the country had achieved since 1947. If the poor and the deprived could be persuaded that the Congress stood for their interests, then the party would once again acquire the popular support which it needed for eradicating poverty and stimulating progress. Needless to say, the crystallization of such radical policies meant a reactivation of the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in the altered circumstances of the late 1960s.

The new mood of the Congress was reflected in a crucial session of AICC held in 1969. In voicing her views before the party, Indira Gandhi outlined a programme of social transformation which frontally attacked a wide range of vested interests within Indian society. She envisaged the abolition of princely privilege and the nationalization of banks as preliminary steps to an assault upon the sources of poverty and deprivation in the country. The radical leadership within the Congress immediately supported her programme, as one which would fortify the party in the eyes of the people, as the great instrument of social transformation in India. At the same time, the conservative leadership of the party broke away into a political formation which increasingly lost touch with the mood of the people.

The radical stance adopted by Indira Gandhi in 1969 became the basis of a series of policies seeking to stimulate the creative energy of the poor and the deprived and to introduce a new era of development in the country. Perhaps the most striking feature of these policies pertained to the rural economy, since the country had been facing actual shortages in food, partly due to failures of the harvest and partly also due to increase in population. Within the span of half a decade, Indira Gandhi's agrarian policies enabled the country to become self-sufficient in food production and even generate surpluses which were stocked in public granaries as a guarantee against future shortages.

With a series of remarkable successes to back her, Indira Gandhi went to the polls in 1971 on the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' or 'Eradicate Poverty'. The people again demonstrated their confidence in her leadership, as well as in the party over which she presided, by extending enthusiastic

support to the Congress. Out of a total of 525 seats in the Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 355. The electoral victory of 1971 was a clear indication that the country was fully behind Indira Gandhi in her efforts to improve the lot of the poor and the deprived; and that her policies, aimed at eradicating poverty, enjoyed the support of an over-whelming majority in the country.

The popularity which Indira Gandhi and the Congress enjoyed with the people was extended to the full in the crisis which soon erupted along the north-eastern frontiers of India. The province of East Pakistan (as it was called in 1971) was in a state of acute ferment for a number of reasons. Since its emergence in 1947, the rulers of Pakistan had treated the eastern wing very shabbily, concentrating all resources and development activity in the western wing. Over and above this, the people of the region had a number of grievances arising out of the cavalier fashion in which the regional language and culture were treated by the ruling classes of Pakistan. Altogether, a powerful movement for liberation grew up in East Pakistan under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Yet the rulers of Pakistan were totally unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of this movement. Indeed, in 1971, as the demand for freedom gathered momentum, they unleashed a reign of terror in the eastern wing of Pakistan, literally forcing millions of Bengalis to seek shelter in India.

The crisis in East Pakistan posed Indira Gandhi a serious challenge. It was clear that India could not stand unconcerned while the aspirations of the East Bengalis were crushed under foot by the ruling establishment of Pakistan, which drew its strength from the western wing. This was all the more so because the millions of refugees who had poured into India literally threatened to wreck the economy, unless a way was found to repatriate them to their homeland.

The Bangladesh crisis evoked from Indira Gandhi statesmanship of a very high order. The strength of this statesmanship lay in the support which she received from the people. No less important was the support that the Soviet Union extended to India, through a treaty of friendship which henceforth became the cornerstone of Indian foreign policy. At the very moment when an army of liberation — the *Mukti Bahini* — initiated hostilities against Pakistani occupation forces in the eastern wing, the Indian Army also took upon itself the task of ending the tyranny of the rulers of Pakistan. A short military campaign brought Pakistan to its knees; and the new state of Bangladesh was born amidst universal rejoicing.

The liberation of Bangladesh, which followed closely upon the electoral victory of 1971, put Indira Gandhi and the Congress in a powerful position. The momentum for progress, which the prime minister had

generated in 1969, was now augmented through a resounding victory at the polls and also through a magnificent success in restructuring the balance of power in South Asia in a manner very favourable to India. Indeed, Indira Gandhi rode a wave of popularity almost without parallel in Indian politics.

Yet there were conservative and communal interests which felt a sense of deep alarm at the changes which Indira Gandhi had already brought about; or planned to bring about in the future. Some of these interests were supported by the Congress leaders who had opposed Indira Gandhi in 1969; others drew upon communal ideology; others, yet again, indulged in the rhetoric of radical change without any understanding of what such change entailed. Altogether, these forces constituted a powerful coalition against Indira Gandhi and the Congress. However, although this alliance of reaction and irresponsibility had failed to muster any support in the national elections of 1971, or in the state elections of 1972, it nevertheless possessed the power to frustrate the progressive measures of Indira Gandhi. The reactionary circles got an opportunity for mischief when the states of Bihar and Gujarat erupted into crisis in the early 1970s. These circles were all too willing to throw their support behind leaders who sought to employ the weapon of 'satyagraha' in order to overthrow a legitimately elected government! The Bihar and Gujarat movements gained considerable strength in the next few years. On the surface, these agitations depended on moral persuasion; in reality, they rested upon techniques of intimidation which were as immoral as they were out of place in a democracy where legitimate power rests upon electoral support. The result of these movements, which were able to exploit the sentiments of sections of youth, was to paralyse the administration and create conditions of anarchy in Bihar and Gujarat.

At the same time as reaction and irresponsibility were launching an assault upon Indira Gandhi, an organized attempt was made to paralyse the railway system in India, which constitutes a crucial component of the economy. In 1974, some leaders of the opposition, who controlled the railway unions, called a strike which was a part of an overall plan of destabilization, although this objective was masked through presenting economic demands on behalf of the workers. Indira Gandhi read in the railway strike, as she also read in the agitations in Gujarat and Bihar, the clear intention of the leaders of the opposition, who had failed to secure popular support in the elections, to render the governance of the country an impossible business. She, therefore, took strong action against the railwaymen just as she also took strong action against those who attempted to disturb the peace of the realm in the northern and western states.

The attack on Indira Gandhi and on the Congress which was simultaneously an attack of the rich and the powerful upon the poor and the weak, also took the form of an attempt to unseat the Prime Minister from the Lok Sabha. At the same time, key members of the government and the judiciary were assassinated. Indira Gandhi reacted to all this by declaring a state of emergency, whereby the government could invigorate the administration and the economy. Her determination to set the wheels of progress in motion was expressed in a 20-point programme which, among other things, sought to reinforce the position of Harijans in society; distribute land to the landless; step up agricultural production; ensure a square deal to the industrial working class; and hold out encouragement to large and small scale industrial entrepreneurs. The 20-point programme was designed for the nation as a whole, but it reinforced in particular the position of the weaker sections of society.

The youth of India, under the leadership of Sanjay Gandhi, emerged at this juncture as a force of great potential and an instrument of social transformation. For the first time in its history, the Congress organized a wing devoted to the induction and education of youth; and this was put under the charge of Sanjay Gandhi. The Youth Congress built up a dedicated cadre, which served as a vibrant link between the party and the people; and it enabled Indira Gandhi to channelize popular enthusiasm into support of the policies of her government.

The years 1975-77 were fateful years in the history of India, when the Congress delivered a new message of striving and achievement to the popular classes. The period was marked by a far-reaching programme of land distribution to the tribals and Harijans; just as it was also marked by a new spurt of productive activity in the industrial and agrarian sectors. The results of all this were reflected in increases in the gross national product as well as in its equitable distribution between different classes and communities. The Congress became the party of the popular classes in a way it had never been so before. Indeed, its commitment to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy acquired a sharpness of focus which made itself felt in all arenas of national endeavour.

Yet the radical policies adopted by Indira Gandhi also earned her the hostility of vested interests in Indian society. The upsurge of hope for a better future among the common people alarmed those classes which controlled a share of the national product out of proportion to their demographic strength. Such vested interests retaliated through a campaign of vilification against Indira Gandhi and the Congress. Their ability to mount such a campaign was considerable because of the control which they exercised over the levers of social and economic power. Small wonder, then, that when Indira Gandhi issued a call for

general elections in 1977, an alliance of parties, which could come together only on a platform of hostility to progress, was able to inflict a defeat on the Congress at the polls. The reverses experienced by the Congress, in 1977 merely highlighted the formidable power of vested interests in the country; since, as subsequent events demonstrated, in reality the common people continued to support Indira Gandhi and her party.

A history of the Congress is no place for an evaluation of the Janata Party, which controlled power in New Delhi for a span of three years. Suffice it to mention here that the new ruling party, which elected as prime minister someone who had been rejected by the Congress earlier, failed to provide firm leadership to the country. As already indicated, the Janata Party was an alliance of political groups which were incapable of agreeing amongst themselves on the policies to be pursued with profit. As a result of the tensions which riddled this party, the economic strength of India as well as her ability to provide leadership to the Third World declined grievously.

The three years which Indira Gandhi spent in the wilderness were years of considerable distress for her and her political colleagues. The leaders of the Janata Party initiated a campaign of vilification against her and the machinery of the state was pressed into service in order to permanently undermine her position as a leader of the people. Yet in a democracy, it is impossible for a ruling party to hoodwink the people for long. The persecution of Indira Gandhi turned out to be wholly counter-productive and merely ensured for her the sympathy as well as the support of large sections of the people. On her part, Indira Gandhi battled fearlessly to clear herself of the charges levied against her by the Janata Party. Her opportunity for staging a comeback came when the leaders of the Janata Party turned a blind eye to the persecution of Harijans in the village of Belchi in Bihar. Indira Gandhi looked upon happenings at Belchi as reflective of what was happening to the deprived and the weak in the country as a whole under the new dispensation. She undertook a journey to Belchi in the summer of 1979 to demonstrate her deep concern for the poorest and the most helpless in the land. The pilgrimage to Belchi was a memorable journey, comparable in its symbolic and political significance to the mahatma's trek from Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad to the remote village of Dandi, in 1930, to initiate the Civil Disobedience Movement.

VII

Belchi marks a decisive turning point in the political development of India. From the very outset, the strength of the Congress lay in the support of the popular classes for the party and its leaders., Indira

Gandhi's visit to a remote hamlet reaffirmed her concern for the socially deprived; and they responded to this gesture by showering their affection on her. The renewed popularity of Indira Gandhi and the Congress was reflected in the elections to the Lok Sabha held late in 1979. The Congress, which underwent a new schism during the years it spent in the political wilderness, went to the polls with a promise to the people of providing a government that would uphold their rights and protect their interests. The people responded by voting for Indira Gandhi in massive numbers and her party secured 351 seats out of a total of 544 in the Lok Sabha. Once again, the link between the Congress and the masses was reaffirmed through the electoral process.

When Indira Gandhi assumed power in 1980, she faced a number of problems arising out of the apathy of the Janata Party towards the welfare of the country. The policies which the Congress had initiated in the 1970s had been completely disowned by the conservative leaders who ruled between 1977 and 1979. To take one instance, land distributed to the Harijans prior to 1977 was taken away from them and restored to its erstwhile owners, the affluent rural classes, which constituted an important factor behind the Congress defeat in 1977. Similarly, other measures designed for progress, too, were repudiated by the Janata Party, whether they concerned the economy or the scientific and cultural development of the country. Typical of the retrogressive stance of the Janata were the attempts to undermine the principles of secularism which the Congress had espoused from the very outset. These principles were substituted by a worldview designed to place serious obstacles in the way of integration of different religious communities into a cohesive national polity.

Indira Gandhi's first task, after assuming office in 1980, was to redress the damage inflicted upon the fabric of society during three years of Janata rule. The machinery of economic growth was reactivated, through introducing a modified version of the 20-point programme, with special emphasis on the needs of the poor and the weak in rural and in urban society. At the same time, steps were taken to reverse cultural policies which had sharpened divisions between different communities. The secular spirit, which had guided the Congress since its inception, was rearticulated in the altered circumstances of 1980. This rearticulation highlighted treatment of strict equality to all classes and communities; just as it also highlighted the nurturing of the varied social traditions which underpinned the composite culture of India.

Perhaps the leadership which Indira Gandhi extended to the Third World stands as the most eloquent testimony to her towering stature in the 1980s. Here she had inherited from her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, a distinguished legacy, resting on the belief that the newly liberated

countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America had political and economic interests which made them partners in a common endeavour, at the same time as it differentiated them from the superpowers. Whatever be the historical basis of non-alignment, Indira Gandhi discerned the substantive force behind it with unmistakable clarity during the course of events which led to the liberation of Bangladesh. Trends in international politics in the decade following the liberation of Bangladesh reinforced Indira Gandhi's conviction that the great issues of war and peace in the 20th century could only be resolved on the platform of the non-aligned movement. The growing economic anarchy in the world community constituted yet another problem which awaited resolution at the hands of the Third World. Throughout her tenure as Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi stressed the need for a more equitable economic relationship between the developing and the developed nations. All these issues were explored with great sensitivity in her speech before the Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in 1983. Never before had the Third World offered such perceptive leadership, on the question of peace in the nuclear age, and also that of equity in economic relation between nations, to mankind as a whole. Perhaps Indira Gandhi's chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Conference was her finest hour as the leader of the most populous democracy in the world. She had matured, by this time, into a political figure of epic stature; and the deep compassion as well as the subtle comprehension with which she reflected upon the problems facing humanity characterized her as one of the truly distinguished figures in world politics in the second half of the 20th century. Speaking before the leaders of Asia, Africa and Latin America, she stated:

The Non-Aligned Movement has stood firmly for a thorough-going restructuring of international economic relations. We are against exploitation. We are for each nation's right to its resources and policies. We want an equal voice in the operation of international institution. We reiterate our commitment to the establishment of a New International Economic Order based on justice and equality. . . .

Our plans for a better life for each of our peoples depend on world peace and the reversal of the arms race. Only general and complete disarmament can provide credible security. Negotiations confined to a closed circle of nuclear-weapon powers have made little progress. We are non-nuclear States, who want nuclear energy used only for peace. But we too have a right to live and be heard. In the name of humanity and on behalf of us all, I call upon nuclear-weapon powers to give up the use or threat to use of nuclear weapons in any circumstances; suspend all nuclear weapons' tests and the production and deployment of nuclear weapons; and resume disarmament negotiations with determination to reach agreement."

If the tragic hand of fate had not intervened at this juncture, there is every reason to believe that Indira Gandhi would have contributed

substantially to the resolution of the military and economic problems facing mankind. However, developments within India were soon to cut short a career so rich in achievement and varied in experience. These developments touched upon the relationship between the Congress and the Sikh community; and the principle of secularism as the basis of Indian unity. From the very outset, the Congress was a party to which many diverse classes and communities had extended their support for the fulfilment of their aspirations. Among those who did so were the Sikhs; a vigorous community of agriculturists whose enterprise had even before 1947 transformed the Punjab into the granary of the subcontinent. The Sikhs also made an outstanding contribution to the struggle for freedom; and since 1920, they had stood shoulder to shoulder with other communities in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Not long after Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, some members of the Sikh community, organized in the Akali Dal, presented to her government a series of demands on behalf of the entire community. Some of these demands pertained to the economic domain; others were linguistic in character; others yet touched upon religious freedom and cultural autonomy. Indira Gandhi admired the Sikh community and respected its legitimate leaders. She, therefore, entered into a dialogue with such leaders to ascertain what could be done to meet the grievances of the community.

However, there were small groups among the Sikhs, who attempted to use the grievances, real or imaginary, of the community to undermine the integrity of the Indian state. The leaders of such groups adopted a blatantly communal posture; and although they enjoyed little support from the majority of the Sikh community, they utilized the tactics of intimidation and terror to precipitate a very serious situation in the Punjab. The most serious facet of the Punjab crisis lay in the transformation of some Sikh shrines into centres of activity prejudicial to the security of India.

Indira Gandhi exhibited exemplary patience in her dialogue with the Sikh leaders stretching over a span of two years. However, it gradually dawned upon her, as it dawned upon the people of India, that a small section of the Sikh leadership was determined to challenge the integrity of the country. On 3 June 1984, therefore, Indira Gandhi entrusted to the army the task of liberating the holy shrines of Sikhism from the clutches of terrorists and secessionists. This task was carried out with the application of minimum force in a very short span of time.

The terrorists and secessionists in the Sikh community, who had held the Punjab to ransom for two years, tried to portray the liberation of the shrines as an attack on the Sikh religion. However, Indira Gandhi's commitment to secularism, and regard for Sikhism and the Sikh

community, were too well known for these attempts to carry any credibility. Yet Sikh terrorists persisted in the tactics of terror; and on the 31 October 1985, Indira Gandhi was treacherously assassinated by two members of her security force who had been infected with the virus of communalism.

In the decade and a half during which Indira Gandhi led India with dedication and distinction, she had earned for herself a unique place in the hearts of her countrymen. During her tenure as prime minister, the economy was put firmly on the path to progress; and her conduct of foreign relations secured for India a place of distinction in the Third World, and a voice which commanded respect in the world community. Perhaps no other woman in history has shaped the destiny of a nation so decisively as Indira Gandhi shaped India's. Her assassination, therefore, was an act of brutality which affected the people most grievously; more particularly, it affected the poor and the deprived, who had looked upon her as their mentor and saviour.

Yet, in this moment of crisis, the Congress showed itself fully worthy of the confidence which the nation reposed in it. In a transition marked as much by promptness as it was by sagacity, the party elected Rajiv Gandhi as the new Prime Minister of India. This youthful member of the Congress had already revealed great promise as a leader. As prime minister, he turned to the nation, and gave voice to the belief that the removal of Indira Gandhi from the stage of politics conferred upon the people a sacred trust and a heavy responsibility: 'You and I have suffered a loss which can never be made good,' Rajiv Gandhi stated. 'You and I must work together to continue and complete the tasks which Indira Gandhi left unfinished. . . . With the scattering of her ashes in the Himalayas will end Indira Gandhi's earthly journey. But the nation's journey continues. Let us walk together, stout of heart and purpose, firm in step.'¹²

Although Rajiv Gandhi had been elected leader of the Congress without a single voice of dissent, it was nevertheless necessary for him to secure a mandate from the electorate. In December 1984, therefore, the Congress once again went to the polls to test its popularity with the people. The results of this election demonstrated the extent to which the people looked upon the Congress as the embodiment of national unity; and the party most likely to successfully accomplish the transformation of India into a modern industrial society. Out of 535 seats in the Lok Sabha, the Congress secured 400. Never before in its long history had the Congress ever scored so well at the polls. However, the greatest election victory ever won by the Congress was in reality a personal triumph for Rajiv Gandhi, whose vision of the future of India, and whose charisma, had captured the imagination of the people.

With the support of the people and the Congress, Rajiv Gandhi turned to the tasks which confronted him with rare determination and courage. Foremost on his agenda was the resolution of the Punjab problem, which had inflicted such grievous wounds on the body politic. However, equally significant was the call which the Prime Minister gave to the nation, to prepare itself for a technological revolution that would place it in the ranks of the foremost industrial nations of the world; and initiate a new era of prosperity in the country. As Rajiv Gandhi observed on the morrow of the election:

You have given my party and me your confidence in overflowing measure. Who could ask for more? And how can we prove worthy of it? Only by working for you with unremitting faith and humility, summoning all our reserves of strength and energy, being as unsparing with ourselves as you have been generous with your trust. . . .

In a few months we shall begin the Seventh Plan. The war against our old enemies — poverty, unemployment, disease, ignorance — continues. In the weeks ahead, we shall review our existing policies and programmes to ensure that our basic objectives of growth with justice are realised within the stipulated time-table.¹³

The people of India responded to the call given by Rajiv Gandhi with an enthusiasm rarely witnessed in the arena of national politics. The new Prime Minister cleared the decks by fashioning an accord with the leaders of the Punjab, which was sealed by the installation of a popularly elected government at Chandigarh. The path was thus opened for focussing attention upon the tasks of social and economic reconstruction through which alone can the people enjoy their rich cultural heritage.

What does the future hold for India? Obviously there is no simple answer to this question. The reconstruction of a nation inevitably involves ceaseless labour and toil over decades, before the results of such activity become manifest. But there is reason to believe that, under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, and that of the Congress, the people will prove themselves capable of transforming India into a creative society, dedicated to the ideal of generating peace and prosperity for itself, as well as for mankind as a whole. Perhaps the saga of struggle and achievement, spelt out in this *Centenary History*, will provide to the leaders and to the people, the poise and self-comprehension necessary for such an epic endeavour.

Footnotes

1. Jawaharlal Nehru: *The Discovery of India*, p. 357.
2. Ibid., pp. 358-9.
3. *Whither India* by Jawaharlal Nehru, published as a series of articles on 9, 10 and 11 October 1933 in the Indian press: See *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. VI, pp. 1-16.
4. Nirmal Kumar Bose: *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 171.
5. M.K. Gandhi: *Young India*, 2 January 1930.
6. M.K. Gandhi: *Young India*, 9 January 1930.
7. *Indian Annual Register*, I, pp. 112-9.
8. N.K. Bose: *Studies in Gandhism*, p. 178.
9. 'A tryst with Destiny', speech delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Constituent Assembly, New Delhi, 14 August 1947.
10. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'The Basic Approach' *AICC Economic Review*, 15 August 1958.
11. Speech by Shrimati Indira Gandhi at the Inaugural Session of the 7th Non-Aligned Conference, *Seventh Non-Aligned Summit documents*.
12. Message to the People by Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 7 November 1984.
13. Speech by Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 5 January 1985, See *The Times of India*, 6 January 1985.

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From April 1976 to March 1977, I took an extensive tour all over the country visiting National and State Archives, the National Library and the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, the Archives of All India Khilafat Committee Office at Bombay, the *Kesari* Office at Pune, the Headquarters Library of the Theosophical Society and the *Hindu* Office at Madras. I also paid a visit to Hyderabad and examined the records at the State Archives and the records of the Government of Nizam of Hyderabad. During my tour abroad, I spent nearly a week at the British Museum and India Office Library at London and Bibliopheque Nationale at Paris. Everywhere I received courteous treatment and promises of help. I express my gratefulness to all these authorities.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover nearly 20,000 pages of valuable material at the Bombay Archives on the events of Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movements which nobody had till then glanced at. I also lo-

cated numerous citizens who had preserved in private collections valuable materials concerning the period from 1901 to 1919. The original records of the meetings of the Working Committee of the All India Khilafat Committee had been carefully preserved. They gave a fascinating account of the discussions on the Khilafat and Non-cooperation Movements. The signatures showed the presence of many stalwarts of Khilafat, and Congress leaders such as Hakim Ajmal Khan, M.A. Ansari, Maulana Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali, Maulana Abdul Bari of Firangi Mahal, Mufti Kifayatulla, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and several others. I wish all this material is microfilmed and preserved for posterity in an appropriate repository.

After the Congress (I) returned to power in 1980, Shrimati Indira Gandhi constituted a Committee in 1982 with herself as Chairman and myself as Executive Director. Shri Rajiv Gandhi, when he became the General Secretary of the AICC(I), generously placed funds at my disposal and continued to remind me that the work had to be expedited.

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released at the historic centenary session of the Congress at Bombay, in December 1985, by our beloved Prime Minister and Congress President, Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

B.N. PANDE
General Editor

A CENTENARY HISTORY OF
THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

VOLUME THREE

1935-1947

Edited by

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Introduction

M.N. Das

1. 1935 : A Turning-Point in Time

IN 1935 THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS completed half a century of its existence as one of the most remarkable political organizations in history. 'Fifty years are not much in the life of a nation, a mere flash in the millennia of India's long past,' wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in his golden jubilee message from the far away Badenweiler in Germany on 6 December 1935.

Yet fifty years are a long period in a human life and within their span can be crowded a world of endeavour and achievement. These fifty years have seen the end of an era and mighty transformation everywhere. . . . In the past, the Congress has stood for full freedom and it has widened its horizon and looked to the masses. May it never falter or forget its mission and may it become even more than it has been the real representative and the voice of millions, who toil and suffer in our country and seek to remove all shackles, political, social and economic, that prevent them from rising to the height of their destiny.¹

Of these fifty years, fifteen had passed under the leadership of Gandhi when a resurgent India saw two great revolutions which shook the stability of the British Empire at its foundation. In the year of the golden jubilee it was evident that the Congress had entered into the culminating phase of its efforts for the liberation of the country.

It was the Government of India Act, 1935, which prepared path for this final struggle. It came in the wake of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement in which more than seventy thousand men and women suffered imprisonment for symbolically breaking the law of an alien power. It also was the product of long and tortuous deliberations running over eight years. But, when it came, it satisfied none. For the Congress, this constitution was a further instrument of bondage and to be fought as such.

Complete independence had been the Congress demand since December 1929, and Gandhi made it known to the British in the Round Table Conference that a constitution which did not accept that basic principle would not be acceptable to India. When he returned from the conference empty-handed, the Congress declared on 1 January 1932 that 'Nothing short of complete independence, carrying full control over the defence, external affairs and finance, with such safeguards as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of the nation, can be regarded by the Congress as satisfactory.' But, the Act offered something disastrously different. As subsequent developments showed, the Congress utilized it to expose the hollowness of the British offer and to put into effect its strategy for destroying the fabric of imperialism. Only twelve years separated independence from the Act of 1935. And, these years formed an epoch of supreme trial for the Congress and the country, and a time of severe ordeal for Mahatma Gandhi.

The framers of the 1935 Act worked on the basis of a few constitutional principles for a political settlement in India. Their main aim, of course, was to stem the tide of Indian revolution. Aware of the fact that Indians had shown, since 1921, a marked capacity for an orderly conduct of parliamentary business, they thought of giving the provinces responsible government. But, at the same time, they took into account the prevailing Hindu-Muslim antagonism in India's public life as well as of the problems of the minorities, and thought of providing statutory safeguards against internal dissension. Secondly, they laid great emphasis on having strong executives in the provinces while conceding parliamentary government, and this executive power, according to them, would have to be vested in the governor for enforcement of law and order and for facing any situation promptly and effectively. Side by side, should the responsible ministers and the legislatures fail in their duty in a province, it was thought necessary to have an authority in India, with adequate powers in reserve, to intervene. This power in reserve was also to be exercised to protect those who had no ability to protect themselves.

The framers of the Act boasted that the greatest gift which British rule had conferred on India was its unity, and expressed their apprehension that 'in transferring so many of the powers of government to the Provinces, and in encouraging them to develop a vigorous and independent political life of their own, we have been running the inevitable risk of weakening or even destroying that unity.' A strong central structure, therefore, was considered essential to hold the autonomous units together.

Laying maximum stress on the unity of the country, the policy makers came to a conclusion that, unless the Indian States under the princes

came into a constitutional relationship with British India, the issue of unity would remain dangerously imperfect. An all-India federation was therefore thought of, with the hope that the ruling princes would become its willing members, giving steadfast support to a strong central government in matters of common policies, particularly in respect of economic arrangements. Such a federation was supposed to present 'solid advantages from the point of view alike of His Majesty's Government, of British India, and of the Indian States'. It was pointed out, however, that in order to bring in the princes, they should be assured of a real voice in the determination of federal policies. If the central powers were to be exercised by the ministers responsible to a purely British-India electorate, it would surely lead to 'serious friction' with the States acceding to the federation.

While laying down such principles, the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform finally raised an important question about the character of the Central Government of India and left it to the British Parliament to decide about it in the light of their observations:

As our enquiries have proceeded we have been increasingly impressed, not by the strength of the Central Government as at present constituted, but by its weakness. It is confronted by a Legislature which can be nothing but (in Bagehot's words) 'a debating society adhering to an executive'. The members of that Legislature are unrestrained by the knowledge that they themselves may be required to provide an alternative government; their opinions have been uninformed by the experience of power, and they have shown themselves prone to regard support of government policy as a betrayal of the national cause. It is no wonder that the criticism offered by the members of such a Legislature should have been mainly destructive; yet it is abundantly clear from the political history of the last twelve years that criticism by the Assembly has constantly influenced the policy of Government. As a result, the prestige of Central Government has been lowered and disharmony between Government and Legislature has tended to sap the efficiency of both.²

The Committee recommended a really effective and strong central executive.

During prolonged debates in both Houses of Parliament it became clear to many members that the proposed constitution was going to give no satisfaction to India. It was also confessed that no individual in England had been able to produce an acceptable proposal. While the Socialist members of the committee went 'too far' in their suggestions, the Conservatives did not want to go far enough. As for the proposals coming from India, the Congress had refused to consider any constitution that was not drawn up by a constituent assembly of the Indian people, and no other party had been able to suggest any workable

alternative. In view of this, Samuel Hoare in his broadcast on 1 January 1935 said: 'It is true that in India a chorus of disapproval has been raised against the Committee's recommendations. There was bound to be an outburst of criticism. No Indian public man can afford to be wholly satisfied with any scheme that contains any reservations or safeguards.'³

The authorities apprehended that if the reforms were confined only to the provinces, leaving the centre untouched, the whole of political India could turn to opposition. It would appear anomalous if popular governments were created in the provinces while the centre was left to function under an official and irresponsible executive. Moreover, if the Indian States were not prevailed upon to join the all-India federation, the constitution would remain incomplete and imperfect.

Yet, Parliament lacked in sincerity in respect of both the federation and responsible government at the centre. The federal part of the Bill came under severe criticism at all its stages from the right wing of the Conservative Party led by Winston Churchill in the Commons and the Marquess of Salisbury in the Lords. During the course of the debate on federation on 12 March 1935, Churchill did not hide his intention to warn the princes against it and said: 'I should be ready to take on my own shoulders the responsibility of persuading them to stand out of it.' As the future proved, Churchill remained true to his word. If the princes ultimately decided not to join the federation, it was the British Conservatives who were responsible. Here was an example of the lack of foresight of the Indian princes which lost them an opportunity to participate in the fast-emerging political system in the perspective of national aspirations for freedom. It was not the federation alone which was sabotaged, but the constitution itself was brought to disrepute when, during the debate in June 1935, Churchill chose to describe the Bill as 'a gigantic quilt of jumbled crochet work, a monstrous monument of shame built by pygmies.'

While the Conservatives wanted to wreck the reforms by disapproving even the limited concessions the Indians were likely to enjoy under the constitution, the Labour Party could read the signs of the harmful consequences the Act was about to initiate. The debates had exposed Conservative hostility towards the Indian Congress. It was not viewed as a dominating factor in politics, and certainly not as the most powerful force whose co-operation alone could provide a chance for the success of the constitutional scheme, but as a nonentity undeserving of any serious consideration. 'My first objection to this Bill,' said Clement Richard Attlee during the debate on 4 June 1935, 'is that I think it is deliberately framed so as to exclude as far as possible the Congress Party from effective power in the new Constitution. On many occasions provisions have been deliberately put forward with that end in view. This is done at

the Centre by giving an undue weight to the princes. The princes are represented as a conservative element to keep left wing elements in check.⁴ Attlee also criticized the Bill for the premium it set on communalism. Such features as indirect election together with communal electorates, and elected chambers divided on communal lines, made the Bill one of the worst the British could have thought of.

In spite of doubts and criticisms, the Bill became an Act on 2 August 1935. Two features of the Act were conspicuous, an All-India Federation comprising Governors' Provinces, Chief Commissioners' Provinces, and the Federating Indian States; and Provincial Autonomy, with a government responsible to an elected legislature in every Governor's Province. It further provided that all functions hitherto exercised by the Secretary of State for India, the Government of India and of the Provinces were resumed by the Crown which redistributed them between the centre and the provinces. Moreover, subjects like foreign affairs, ecclesiastical affairs and defence were excluded from the jurisdiction of the Indian legislatures and were kept in the hands of the governor-general, while the governor-general and the governors of the provinces were invested with special powers in respect of the subjects transferred to the control of responsible ministers. In these matters they remained responsible to British Parliament.

Since the provisions regarding federation were not put into operation, the Act of 1935 remained valid only in respect of provincial arrangements. With the creation of two new provinces, Sind and Orissa, and separation of Burma from British India, there were, under the Act, eleven Governors' Provinces, and six Chief Commissioners' Provinces. The latter were to be administered by the governor-general through chief commissioners.

The Act introduced provincial autonomy in the Governors' Provinces. The executive authority of a province was vested in the governor who acted as the representative of the Crown. A Council of Ministers was provided to aid and advise the governor in the discharge of his functions. In certain important matters like law and order the governor had special responsibilities to act in his sole discretion. The governor was to appoint ministers normally from amongst the members of the legislature and they were to remain responsible to it.

Extraordinary powers were also given to the governor to refuse his assent to bills passed by the legislature, to promulgate ordinances when the legislature was not in session, and also to issue ordinances in respect of certain subjects at any time. He also had the power, under certain conditions, to pass Governor's Acts which could be as permanent as other Acts. And, whenever there was a failure of the constitutional

machinery, he could govern the province in his discretion by a proclamation to that effect.

The governor, of course, exercised these vast powers under the control and direction of the governor-general and of the British Parliament. Viewed from the angle of such centralized power in British hands, provincial autonomy appeared a mere mockery of responsible government.

Under the Act of 1935 only about 10 per cent of the Indian population got the right to vote. The electorates were divided on communal lines.

Much before parliament had passed the bill, the Congress had observed 7 February 1935 as the All-India Protest Day against the Joint Parliamentary Committee's Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. The President of the Congress, Rajendra Prasad, while fixing the day of protest, released to the press the following resolution to be passed in public meetings all over the country:

The public meeting of citizens of . . . condemns the proposed constitutional changes as conceived in a spirit of imperialist domination and economic exploitation and disclosing no intention of transferring real power to the people of India. This meeting places on record its considered opinion that it prefers to continue the struggle for Swaraj under the present constitution and calls upon the popular representatives in the legislatures to reject the proposed scheme.⁵

When the Act finally came, it came as a challenge to the Indian people and the Congress decided to face it as such.

Gandhi understood the meaning of the new political situation that was being created in the country and was totally indifferent towards the Act. Through the later half of 1935 and the early months of 1936, while the Congress debated the merits and demerits of provincial autonomy, being troubled with the dilemma of whether to accept it or to reject it, Gandhi maintained his silence. He, in fact, had imposed on himself a retirement from the Congress since October 1934 in order to devote his time to a village reconstruction programme. Physically overworked, and suffering acute mental strain, the Mahatma was not keeping well, but remained fully alive to the responsibilities that rested on his shoulders. He wanted the Congress to rise to the occasion and, for the crucial days to come, thought of Nehru as the correct choice as the next President of the Congress. When Nehru's reply came in the affirmative from the Badenweiler sanatorium where he was spending painful days at the bedside of the dying Kamala Nehru, Gandhi wrote back on 3 October 1935 with a feeling of confidence:

Your letter about the wearing of the next year's crown was delightful. I was glad to have your consent. I am sure that it would solve many difficulties

and it is the rightest thing that could have happened for the country. Your presidentship at Lahore [in 1929] was totally different from what it would be at Lucknow. In my opinion it was comparatively plain sailing at Lahore in every respect. It won't be so in any respect at Lucknow. But those circumstances I cannot imagine anybody better able to cope with than you. May God give you all the strength to shoulder the burden.⁶

Nehru was in prison when the Constitution of 1935 was being finalized and passed. Arrested in February 1934, he spent 18 months in jail, till he was released early in September 1935 because of his wife Kamala Nehru's grave illness. Proceeding to Badenweiler that month to see her, he spent six months in Europe during which time he could visit England where he had had the occasion to express his views on Indian situation. In an interview to the press in London on 27 January 1936, Nehru gave an indication of how the Congress was going to receive the new Act:

Nobody in India today is thinking in terms of this constitution because everyone is agreed that it gives nothing. This constitution cannot be worked and you cannot get anything out of it. The question is how to oppose it. I cannot say how we will oppose it. It is highly likely that the Congressmen will put up candidates but it is taken for granted that they will put up candidates and contest elections in order to oppose the constitution. Those who talk of taking office and accepting ministerial posts will do so to oppose the constitution. The Government of India Act is essentially an Act which converts and mortgages India completely to a number of vested interests — the main interests being the city of London and the British Government. The new federal constitution converts India into a magnified Indian State.⁷

Nehru returned to India after the sad demise of Kamala in February 1936. The Congress was going to meet at Lucknow on 12 April under his presidentship. A new viceroy was also coming to India to succeed Lord Willingdon.

While the British Cabinet was busy searching for a suitable man for that difficult position at a difficult time, a notable Conservative leader, Robert Horne, expressed his concern in the Commons saying that 'the Viceroy would be the keystone of all that mighty fabric; if he failed nothing could save the system which had been set up; the duty to be laid upon him was the most exacting laid upon any one man in the history of our legislature.'⁸ The Prime Minister, Baldwin, thought of two men, Lord Linlithgow and the Marquess of Zetland. And, it was Linlithgow who accepted the more challenging task of coming to India, while Zetland was appointed the Secretary of State. On 18 April 1936, Linlithgow was installed as the Viceroy. By then, the policy of the National Congress had been announced from Lucknow. Little did Linlithgow know at that time that the empire he had come to govern was on the

verge of a new upheaval and that his government would have to pass through one of the most difficult of times before the demise of the raj.

The Lucknow session of the Congress which commenced on 12 April 1936 proved momentous for the nation. Accompanied by seven of its ex-presidents, including Mahatma Gandhi, the new president, Jawaharlal Nehru, began its proceedings amid exuberant enthusiasm and high expectations of the assembled delegates. In his presidential address that evening, for two hours and a half, he held before the people a new vision of India while urging them on to determined efforts to reach the goal:

I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine; it is a philosophy of life and as such also it appeals to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry, as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system.⁹

It was pointed out that the struggle for freedom was not merely for the liberation of the land from the foreign yoke but also for securing social and economic justice for the common man. Unless the Congress reoriented its policy in order to turn into a socialist organization, the gains of political independence would be limited and fail to meet the real needs of the masses. With this vision for the future, Nehru turned to the immediate challenge which faced the country. Describing the new Act as 'a charter of slavery', he announced: 'To this Act our attitude can only be one of uncompromising hostility and a constant endeavour to end it.'

The crux of the problem was whether to contest the election to the coming provincial legislatures under the provisions of the new Act or not. The Congress President felt that, under the prevailing circumstances, there was no other choice but to contest the election, but made it clear that the Congress should seek election on the basis of detailed political and economic programmes, with the demand for a constituent assembly in the forefront. 'One of the principal reasons for our seeking election,' he said, 'will be to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and to the scores of millions of the disfranchised, to acquaint them with our future programme and policy, to make the masses realise that we not only stand for them but that we are of them and seek to co-operate with them in removing their social and economic burdens.'

The Congress appeal and message were to be carried to the very bottom of the social ladder, to the poor and the exploited who had been denied the right to vote, but who constituted the vast majority of the people. To rouse them to consciousness for their economic emancipation and to draw them away from narrow prejudices of caste and community were considered imperative. The election was, thus, an opportunity for the Congress to carry its ideals to the people at large. To Nehru, the only right and the safe way was to stand four-square on the Congress programme and to make no compromise with vested interests, reactionary groups, and those who had opposed the national struggle in the past or had given support to imperialism.

There was the problem of 'office or no office' after the elections, which demanded judicious decision. The acceptance of office could lead to a compromise with imperialism and prove dangerous to the ultimate goal of independence and revolutionary changes. Under a constitution that was undemocratic, with its provisions for 'safeguards' and reserved powers in hands of the British, it was obvious that the responsible ministers would assume responsibility without power, and they would find themselves helpless to discharge their duty to the people. Yet, to fight and win elections but decline office would mean that the Congress was unwilling to accept power with courage. Nehru found a way out of this dilemma. If the Congress found it difficult to work out its programme while in office, it could mobilize the people to do away with a system which did not permit popular ministers to keep their promises. The myth of the British-made constitution would be exploded thereby. 'While we use the platform of the legislatures to press that programme, we seek to end these imperialist bodies by creating deadlocks in them whenever we are in a position to do so,' he said.¹⁰

Besides the president's directives on the path to be followed, a number of resolutions were passed during the three-day session encompassing internal and external situations. The Congress condemned 'the widespread and intensive suppression of civil and, in many instances, personal liberties in India by the British Government, with the object of crushing the national and labour and peasant movements'. It decided to organize a foreign department of the All-India Congress Committee Office with a view to build and maintain contacts with external bodies and win their co-operation in the cause of Indian freedom. In view of the impending gloom on the world horizon, the Congress accepted Romain Rolland's invitation to participate in the World Congress for Peace to be held in Geneva, and assured its full sympathy for struggle against war and fascism. It also passed a resolution declaring its opposition to the participation of India in any imperialist war in the perspective of threats from fascist dictatorships, rivalries among the great imperialist powers,

and the feverish growth of armaments. Expressing the sympathy of the Indian nation for the people of Ethiopia who were heroically defending their country against fascist aggression, the Congress condemned 'the great powers and the League of Nations for their policy in regard to the Italo-Abyssinian war'.

The Lucknow Congress closed with hope and optimism. It was no easy task for Nehru, as Sarojini Naidu said towards the close of the session, to reconcile almost irreconcilable modes of thought and to be able to hold together in friendliness elements that might have been hostile to one another. 'In this city of old traditions,' she said, 'this city of forgotten kings, this city that is now really a shrine of *Musafirs* and Poets, we have witnessed the birth of a new vision, the coming of a new dream.'¹¹

The very day that the Lucknow session opened, the All-India Muslim League was meeting in Bombay in its 24th session. It condemned the federal scheme of the 1935 Act, but decided to work the provincial scheme. Under the presidency of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the League decided to form its central and provincial parliamentary boards to prepare for the coming elections.

The country was, thus, in an atmosphere of political expectation when the new viceroy assumed office. A man of strong will and aware of widespread discontent, Linlithgow thought it necessary to start his rule with a note of warning to all. In a broadcast talk he emphasized the value of law and order saying:

Amongst the manifold duties of the Viceroy, none is more vital than that of the maintenance of peace and good order throughout India. Believe me, my friends, that I can do you no greater service than by the vigilant and effective discharge of this duty. The long story of progress and political evolution throughout the world proves beyond all questions that, of all the factors that may make for retrogression and reaction, none is more powerful than civil disorder to inflict irreparable hurt upon the body-politic.¹²

What the viceroy regarded the matter of highest importance to him was the strict impartiality in respect of conflicting political demands. 'I would have you know,' he announced, 'that I am incapable of preferring any one community before another. . . . God has indeed been good to me for He has given me five children. . . . I love them all most dearly. But among my children I have no favourite.'¹³ These words of the viceroy led some people to think that he would face the Indian issues in national terms, not communal, and might go by progressive ideas in working out a good relation with the Congress. Jinnah, in fact, told his disciples that the new viceroy's pledge of impartiality was a poor reward for Muslim loyalty to the Government.

The subsequent events however showed that Linlithgow was the most dogmatic anti-Congress and pro-League viceroy since Lord Minto. His attitude towards Gandhi was one of considerable distrust right from the start. When, in their first interview in Delhi, G.D. Birla suggested that the viceroy might do well in requesting Gandhi to meet him, he advanced the plea that he should not act in a way which might bring comfort or votes to the Congress Party and he would not therefore send for Gandhi.

Thus began the rule of Linlithgow, when obvious signs of uncertainty in Indo-British relations loomed large on the political horizon. The question before the country was, how the British and the Congress would work under the much-debated and highly controversial Constitution of 1935, and how the people in general would react to its working.

2. The Election and its Aftermath

Since the Act of 1935 was to come into force on 1 April 1937, and since the fate of the federation as well as of the central government remained clearly indefinite, the main attention of the country got diverted towards the prospects of provincial autonomy. And, since elections to the provincial legislatures were to be held early in 1937, the Indian political parties got ready for the electoral fray much in advance. On the one hand, every party was unhappy with the so-called autonomy, yet, on the other, most parties wanted to make the best use of the election to serve their respective purposes. For the Congress, the election was desirable for educating the people and, after the victory, for utilizing the popular verdict for attaining higher objectives. Rightly did Nehru sum up the Congress purpose in the election in these few words: 'I will not ask you to cast a single vote in favour of the Congress if you do not wish to vote for independence.'¹⁴

Meeting in Wardha towards the end of April 1936, the Congress Working Committee formed a parliamentary committee consisting of Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Abul Kalam Azad, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, Bhulabhai Desai, Narendra Dev and Govind Ballabh Pant, together with the presidents of all provincial Congress committees and Khan Sahib from the North-West Frontier Province to look after the organization of elections. The parliamentary committee later on elected Vallabhbhai Patel as its president and Rajendra Prasad and Govind Ballabh Pant as secretaries.

Much thought was devoted to the preparation of an election manifesto that would present to the people what the Congress stood for. Describing the growing poverty of the country, the rapid deterioration of the condition of all classes, the repressive policy of the government and the imposition of an unwanted constitution, the manifesto

highlighted the need for replacement of the existing system. The objective of legislators elected on the Congress ticket would be to end the acts, ordinances and regulations which served as the instruments of oppression, and to restore to people their civil liberty. The Congress aimed at agrarian reforms, improvement in the living standard of the working class, upliftment of the depressed classes, and solution of communal problems.

Electioneering was in full swing all over the country when the Congress met in its 50th Session at Faizpur on 27-8 December 1936, under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. The leaders had made hurricane tours of the country to convey the Congress message to the people and the entire organization was engrossed in election work with over a thousand candidates put up for contest. The election campaign was so conducted as to establish mass contacts with a view to inspire mass response to national calls, and for future mass action too. 'We go to the legislatures', declared Nehru in his presidential address, 'not to co-operate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people. . . . We are not going to the legislatures to pursue the path of constitutionalism or a barren reformism.'¹⁵

The Congress realized during the electioneering that the Muslim masses, confined as they were within communal electorates, could not be influenced through general contact to any desirable extent because of the politics the Muslim League played. Even if the League policy in respect of the new Act was near the Congress policy, in actual ideology the two organizations differed widely. The Congress tried to preach its doctrines among the Muslim voters while campaigning for its own Muslim candidates, but that did not demolish their communal outlook. Attempts were made to set up Congress Muslims to stand as League candidates, and talks were in progress for co-operation between the two parties after the elections and before office acceptance. Jinnah, at this stage, was in favour of such co-operation, conscious as he was of the weakness of the League as well as of his own shaky position in that otherwise unsteady organization, dominated by religious dogmatists.

An electorate of 37 million men and women went to the polls in the opening months of 1937. India was experiencing a profound political education as Congressmen penetrated almost to every village of the subcontinent. Meetings, processions and slogans kept the atmosphere surcharged with enthusiasm and emotion. And, amidst everything, one name acted like magic in drawing the voters to the polling booths to exercise their votes. As Hyde Gowan, Governor of the Central Provinces, wrote: 'The name of Gandhi is unquestionably one to

conjure with among the masses in this Province — not for any particular political reason, but simply because he is Gandhi — and reports from several districts indicate that the one Congress slogan which has been universally successful is — 'Put your papers in the white box and vote for Gandhi.'¹⁶

It was not in the Central Provinces alone, but almost everywhere in the country, that the same name worked, in almost the same manner, since Gandhi was the symbol of a movement and a struggle, the election being only a minor event in the nation's march towards independence under his leadership. Added to the Mahatma's charismatic hold on popular imagination, the organizing ability of the Congress High Command was seen at its best. Nehru, as the president of the Congress, performed the Herculean task of travelling fifty thousand miles by plane, train, car, cart, boat and foot, and of addressing over ten million people. Other stalwarts like Patel, Azad and Rajendra Prasad, with myriads of leaders and followers, showed the country how effective the Congress was and how powerful its hold.

The results of the election astounded the administration. By middle of February, the viceroy sent reports to the Secretary of State with news from all the provinces coming in that the Congress would win rather more seats than was expected. At the final count, the Congress was seen to have secured absolute majorities in six out of the eleven provinces. It captured 711 out of the total of 808 general seats. In the Muslim electorates, too, the Congress captured 26 seats out of 482, having fielded 58 candidates. Nineteen of these seats were won in the North-West Frontier Province, thanks to the efforts of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Khan Sahib.

On the other hand, the Muslim League showed a dismal performance. The results of the election proved that the League had no base in the Muslim majority provinces of the Punjab, Bengal, Sind and the North-West Frontier. In the Punjab, it secured only 2 out of 86 Muslim seats. In Bengal, though the result was somewhat better, it obtained only 40 out of 119 seats. In Sind and the Frontier Province, the League got not a single seat. It was the other Muslim political parties which swept the Muslim electorates in these provinces.

Surprisingly enough, it was in the Hindu majority provinces that the League showed some tangible success. In the United Provinces the League secured 27 out of 64 Muslim seats, other seats having mostly gone to the independents and others; in Bombay it got 20 seats out of 29; and in Madras 11 out of 28. In all, the League failed to obtain even twenty-five per cent of the Muslim seats and thus lost face in presenting itself as the real representative body of the Indian Muslims.

It was at this moment of failure and despair that Muhammad Ali Jinnah turned to the Congress for the latter's co-operation in the next political step, namely, the formation of ministries. But, to the Congress, in the wake of its victory, the League appeared as an organization of too little consequence to deserve such consideration, particularly since it showed no inclination to adopt progressive policies as enunciated by the Congress.

The elections over, the immediate issue before the Congress leadership was to decide whether or not to accept office in the Congress majority provinces. Of late, Nehru had been in a more radical mood in looking at the 'slave constitution' which he wanted removed 'lock, stock and barrel' so that the field would be clear for a constituent assembly of the Indian people. Many others, however, did not share this view. Ultimately, everything depended on the advice Gandhi might tender.

At this stage of political development, it appeared prudent to some that the government which offered the constitution should come forward to dispel some of the Congress misgivings about the stringent restrictions which were likely to render the powers of the ministries futile. On 3 March the Governor of Madras, Lord Erskine, had had a discussion with Rajagopalachari who had just returned from a visit to Gandhi at Wardha and who suggested that the constitutional tangle could be solved if the viceroy were to see Gandhi and agree to a reasonable formula with him. When the governor informed Linlithgow about this the latter at once suspected a trick and concluded that it would be dangerous for the viceroy to give any assurance to the Congress about the manner in which the special powers would be used. He wanted to go by the spirit and the letter of the Act, no matter what the Congress felt or did.

'We have abundant proof,' wrote the viceroy to the Secretary of State, expressing his intuitive suspicion of the Congress, 'that the ultimate purpose of Nehru and Gandhi is to make for the overthrow of government by the organisation of agrarian mischief on the grand scale. Our best hope of avoiding a direct clash is in the potency of Provincial Autonomy to destroy the effectiveness of Congress as an All-India instrument of revolution.'¹⁷ Linlithgow satisfied himself that the Congress would be obliged to accept office under internal pressure, and if that did not happen, he would prefer to prepare for an immediate breakdown and the imposition of Section 93 rather than accept any limitation on the viceroy or the governors in respect of their special responsibilities or the use of safeguards.

The Secretary of State, Zetland, was equally of the opinion that it would be impossible for the Congress to shed its civil-disobedience

mentality. Any attempt to calm the Congressmen down through office or power would be 'optimism run mad'. Gandhi appeared to him as behaving like a 'saintly old sinner' with the ulterior objective of uniting his forces for launching a grand offensive at the appropriate moment. 'Perhaps you will think all this the jaundiced view of one who has never been able to reconcile the claim of the little man to be the fountain head of righteousness with the tortuous cunning of his ways,' he told the viceroy.¹⁸

From the government side, thus, the possibility of any guarantee of non-interference appeared remote. To Gandhi, this was painful besides being problematic. He did not propose to lay down any impossible condition. On the contrary, he wanted to devise means which could be acceptable to the governors. When there was no response to his suggestions, Gandhi declared:

A strong party with the decisive backing of the electorate could not be expected to put itself in the precarious position of being in dread of interference at the will of the Governors. The question may be put in another way. Should the Governors be courteous to the Ministers or discourteous? I hold that it would be distinctly discourteous if they interfered with their Ministers in matters over which law gave the latter full control and with which the Governors were under no legal obligation to interfere. A self-respecting Minister conscious of an absolute majority at his back could not but demand the assurance of non-interference. . . .

It has been claimed on behalf of the British Government that the Act gives autonomy to the Provinces. If that is so, it is not the Governors but the Ministers who are during their period of office responsible for the wise administration of their provinces. Responsible Ministers sensible of their duty could not submit to interference in the pursuance of their daily duty. It does therefore appear to me that once more the British Government has broken to the heart what it has promised to the ear.¹⁹

Gandhi issued this statement on 30 March 1937. On 1 April, the provisions of the Act concerning provincial responsible governments were put into force. Since the Congress would not form ministries unconditionally, the government promptly placed minority ministries in office in the six Congress-majority provinces, for these ministries could function on an interim basis for six months without legislative support. It was a shabby deal, thought Gandhi. Describing the minority ministries as 'toy ministries', formed with the help of non-Congress members, he wrote in anguish: 'What a lie! . . . This autonomy is still-born. But the teachers of the world teach us to pray when human effort proves vain. I believe in them and therefore do not lose hope but am praying.'²⁰

The Congress was in a militant mood, while the government found itself in trouble. The minority ministries would not continue in face of

majority opposition and obviously a constitutional deadlock was inevitable. The matter stood on the simplest logic — if the Congress did not accept office, the Act stood destroyed. Linlithgow, therefore, knuckled down from his earlier stand in order to soften the Congress attitude. 'I am convinced,' announced the viceroy in a broadcast message to the people on 21 June, 'that the shortest road to that fuller political life which many of you so greatly desire is to accept this Constitution and to work for it for all it is worth. Of their nature, politics are ever dynamic, and to imagine that their expression in terms of a written Constitution can render them static would be utterly to disregard the lessons of history and indeed the dictates of common sense.'²¹

The Congress got the meaning of these words. It knew it had the power to break the constitution at any time. But since the constitution provided an opportunity to prove to the nation its ability to govern in the interest of the people, several of the leaders thought it worthwhile to try office for some time at least. To most Congressmen a confrontation with the government was inevitable sooner or later. That being so, the Congress in power could make the constitution a springboard for its next agitation.

With these considerations in the background, the Congress Working Committee, meeting at Wardha early in July, adopted a resolution permitting office-acceptance. The provincial interim ministries resigned forthwith and, in July 1937, Congress ministries were formed in Bihar, Bombay, the Central Provinces, Madras, Orissa, and the United Provinces. Later, Congress governments were also formed in Assam and the North-West Frontier Province.

To the viceroy, a great storm seemed to have blown over. Finding all quiet on the Congress front, he considered the time propitious enough to invite Gandhi to New Delhi. They met on 4 August 1937 to exchange views. After the meeting, Linlithgow wrote the following to the King Emperor, giving his impression of the Mahatma:

The interview was friendly in tone and its effect throughout India has been very useful in that it has contributed to the improvement of the political atmosphere and has tended to consolidate the good impression made by the decision of Congress to take office. I thought Mr Gandhi attractive and extremely shrewd. He is courteous in his approach and frank in his expression of opinion, but I judge him to be implacable in his hostility to British rule in India, to the destruction of which he has dedicated every fibre of his mind.²²

Gandhi could not be influenced by the viceroy to the slightest degree as regards his principles. He failed to move him even from his policy of forbidding official contact between Congressmen and the British. On

this, Gandhi kept no secret of his suspicion of imperialist hands in influencing the Congress. Linlithgow also met some other Congress leaders as well as the leaders of the Muslim community. When Jinnah met him, the viceroy formed rather a poor opinion of him and commented: 'I do not frankly feel any deep confidence in him and I suspect that he is one of those political leaders who can play a personal hand but no other, and whose permanent control on the allegiance of their followers is frequently open to question.'

Jinnah, in the meantime in his frantic attempt to establish his hold on his coreligionists, was searching for faults in the Congress in order to prevent the Muslim masses from going over to it in response to its creed of economic emancipation of the poor and the downtrodden. He felt alarmed at what Nehru was about to do in bringing the Hindus and Muslims together. 'We failed,' Nehru had declared on 19 March 1937, referring to the Congress failure to win more Muslim seats in the elections,

because we had long neglected working among the Muslim masses and we could not reach them in time. But where we reached, especially in the rural areas, we found almost the same response, the same anti-imperialist spirit, as in others. The communal problem, of which we hear so much, seemed to be utterly non-existent, when we talked to the peasant, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. . . . We have too long thought in terms of pacts and compromises between communal leaders and neglected the people behind them. That is a discredited policy and I trust that we shall not revert to it. . . . We deal with economic groups today and the problems of poverty and unemployment and national freedom are common for the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh and the Christian. . . . This way lies the ending of what has long been known as the communal problem.²³

In Nehru's assessment of Muslim position, while there was perceptible ferment amongst their intelligentsia and the masses, they possessed no effective leadership and hence drifted aimlessly and helplessly. Communal leadership provided them no future and thereby weakened them politically. It was time, therefore, to replace that discredited leadership and give them a dynamic progressive leadership. This, he thought, the Congress alone could do.

Nehru had propounded his Muslim mass contact theory in his presidential address at the All-India National Convention of Congress Legislators on 19 March 1937. The first Muslim to feel alarmed at this was Muhammad Iqbal who drew the attention of Jinnah to Nehru's address almost immediately. 'It is absolutely necessary,' Iqbal advised Jinnah on 20 March, 'to tell the world both inside and outside India that the economic problem is not the only problem in the country. From the Muslim point of view the cultural problem is of much greater consequence to

most Indian Muslims. At any rate it is not less important than the economic problem.'²⁴ In his subsequent letters during those last days of his life, Iqbal assured Jinnah that 'the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal is not likely to receive much response from the Muslims' and urged him to rescue the League from the clutches of the upper classes and make it a body of the masses. Side by side, he drilled the idea of Islamic separatism into the mind of Jinnah by suggesting the redistribution of the country 'to provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities'. 'Don't you think,' he asked Jinnah on 28 May, 'that the time for such a demand has already arrived? Perhaps this is the best reply you can give to the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru. . . . Muslim India hopes that at this serious juncture your genius will discover some way out of our present difficulties.'²⁵

Jinnah was in a depressed mood. Rejected by the Muslim electorate, suspected by the orthodox Leaguers, and slighted by the British, he hoped for recovery with Congress help. Quite for some time after the elections he was fondly trying for an understanding with the Congress for ministry making. During the elections in the United Provinces the League had opposed the powerful groups of Muslim landlords and taluqdars and had maintained rapprochement with the Congress. It was in this context and in that province that Jinnah thought of an experiment on Congress-League coalition and hoped that a success there might lead to similar experiments elsewhere. But when his emissary Khaliquzzaman first broached this idea to Nehru, the latter showed no interest. Subsequently, the Chief Minister designate of the United Provinces, Govind Ballabh Pant, and the League leaders discussed the issue but could not reach agreement. In mid-July 1937, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad finally laid down conditions for Congress-League co-operation viz. that the Muslim League group in the UP legislature should cease to function as a separate group and that the Muslim League Parliamentary Board in UP should be dissolved. The negotiations continued for a few days more before they finally broke down.

Jinnah's ego as a formidable former Congress leader was deeply offended at what he regarded as neglect and disregard on the part of persons whom he regarded as his juniors in national politics and his reaction was one of raging fury. An earlier statement by Nehru that, 'In the final analysis there are only two forces in India today — British imperialism and the Congress representing Indian nationalism', continued to jar on his ears as he began to read between the lines of Nehru's latest Muslim mass contact theory. On 26 July 1937, Jinnah expressed his bitter feelings in a statement, saying:

In the meantime the Congress policy was that Mussalmans should join the Congress unconditionally and sign their pledge. After the Congress was

flushed with its majority in six provinces, it deliberately decided to ignore, nay, decided to non-cooperate with the Muslim League Parties in the various Provincial Legislatures, and they have in forming the Ministries vindicated the justice and the fair treatment to the minorities urged and promised by Mahatma Gandhi very recently by having made a good feast of all the loaves and fishes that are at present available for the Congress Party in the various Legislatures and getting a stray Mussalman to exchange a pledge overnight to accept Ministry the next morning.²⁶

Some of the elected Muslim legislators in the UP Assembly, as elsewhere, were thinking in the meanwhile of joining the Congress because of its new approach to people's problems. To Jinnah, these trends appeared most dangerous. He warned such waverers not to betray the party. 'They may go, but those members of the League, if they have a shred of conscience left, should tender their resignation and contest the seats again on Congress ticket,' he said.²⁷ He asked his followers to have courage and faith and give up their defeatist mentality, to organize, consolidate, and establish solidarity and unity, and to believe that *Delhi dur nest*.

Rapidly did Jinnah transform himself into a spirited communal leader, having everything to say against the Congress ministries, against Hindi and *Bande Mataram*, the Congress flag and Hindu nationalism, even though his vision for separation was yet to take shape. His phenomenal rise to greatness within the next few years was rather providential, shaped by historical forces and factors which came to operate abruptly, such as the coming of the Second World War, when the British Empire was called upon to fight a life and death struggle; the open revolution of the Congress to end British rule; and, the desperate need of the British to maintain Muslim India as its most dependable prop.

The Congress ministries, in the meantime, began to function. From the time of their very inception Gandhi thought it necessary to lay down a code of conduct for every minister and a programme of work for the ministries to adopt. He utilized the columns of the *Harijan* to issue mandates to the new rulers, and wrote a series of articles on their duties and responsibilities:

Congressmen have for the past seventeen years disciplined themselves in rigorous simplicity. The nation will expect the Ministers to introduce that simplicity in the administration of their Provinces. They will not be ashamed of it, they will be proud of it. We are the poorest nation on earth, many millions living in semi-starvation. Its representatives dare not live in a style and manner out of all correspondence with their electors.²⁸

Enforcement of prohibition, reform of education, turning of jails into reformatories, abolition of salt tax, greater attention to villages and the

peasantry, and emphasis on khadi were considered some of the urgent matters to be taken up. Gandhi also hoped that the Congress governments would make no distinction between community and community, high caste and low caste, in their approach to various administrative problems. Aware of the possible weakness of the ministers and their getting intoxicated with power, Gandhi wanted to place them under the supervision of the High Command. He reminded them that, whereas the ministers were formally under the control of the governors, they were in reality under the control of the Congress. Since they owed their status to the Congress, they were parenthetically responsible to the Congress. He equally advised the people to lend their hearty co-operation to the ministers, and if the latter went wrong, to complain to the High Command and seek redress, rather than take the law into their own hands.

With the Congress in power in so many provinces, Gandhi's vision widened for future programmes of action. There was no other political party in the country to question the authority of the Congress, nor was there any with any base in the villages. 'So far, therefore,' he said, 'as I can see a vast opportunity is at the disposal of the Ministers in terms of the Congress objectives of complete Independence, if only they are honest, selfless, industrious, vigilant and solicitous for the true welfare of the starving millions.'²⁹

While in office, however, it was no smooth sailing for the Congress ministries so far as the implementation of their policies was concerned. Their relation with the governors, resting on judicious restraint, could not always prove conducive to free decision-making. At places and on occasions, confrontation became inevitable, leading to constitutional crises. Notable examples of such situations were presented by Bihar and the United Provinces when the Congress ministries decided to release political prisoners who were still languishing in jails on charges of serious offences. The governor-general instructed the governors not to abide by the advice of their premiers in this matter. Such interference from the top adversely affected the very basis of autonomy as well as the honour of the responsible ministers. The UP and Bihar premiers, therefore, tendered their resignation in February 1938. The Congress, meeting in its 51st session at Haripura in Gujarat on 19-21 February 1938, under the presidency of Subhas Chandra Bose, expressed its deep concern over such developments. 'I shall not go over all the facts with regard to the crisis in UP and Bihar, with which you are all familiar,' declared the Congress President,

I shall only say this. On this question of crisis the Congress is entirely in the right. The Governor-General and the Governors are entirely in the wrong. . . . It is for the ministers and for the ministers alone to assume the

fullest responsibility for law and order, and when the Congress Cabinets of the UP and Bihar were fully prepared to accept responsibility for law and order to release the political prisoners, surely neither the Governor-General nor the Governors had any right to interfere. . . . The recent action of the Congress ministries in these two provinces has made it perfectly clear that our ministers are there for the good of the people. They are there to strengthen the Congress organisations throughout the country. They are not there for the sake of office.³⁰

The storm, however, passed when the governor-general agreed to the gradual release of the prisoners after examination of each case, and the premiers withdrew their resignation.

The Haripura session of the Congress has the distinction of being the first attended by ministers in charge of provinces who attended it as delegates or members of the AICC. There were also deputations from South Africa and Ceylon. Thanks to the organizing ability of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, this session saw so large an assemblage that it came to be described as the 'biggest Session in the history of the Congress'. The leaders were conscious of the prevailing differences between the right and the left in their own ranks, but were equally determined to sink them and work as 'the one supreme organ of mass struggle'. The need of the hour was to rally the whole country under the Congress banner. The President appealed to the leftist groups 'to pool all their strength and their resources for democratising the Congress and reorganising it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis.'

'In conclusion', said Subhas Chandra Bose with emotion at the end of his presidential address, 'I shall voice your feelings by saying that all India fervently hopes and prays that Mahatma Gandhi may be spared to our nation for many, many years to come. India cannot afford to lose him and certainly not at this hour. We need him to keep our struggle free from bitterness and hatred. We need him for the cause of Indian independence. What is more — we need him for the cause of humanity.'³¹

By the time of the Haripura session, the hostility of Jinnah and the Muslim League towards the Congress had assumed rather ugly contours. To counteract the League propaganda, Nehru moved a resolution on 20 February 1938 that the Congress 'regards it as its primary duty and fundamental policy to protect the religious, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India and will give widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation.'³² Great satisfaction was expressed at the growth of anti-imperialist feeling among the Muslims and other minorities and at the growing unity of all classes and communities in the country's struggle for freedom. Nehru criticized the

League for its attacks on the Congress and said: 'Today, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and Parsis are joining the Congress in lakhs. Vested interests are therefore afraid of its growing power. They fear that their control over the masses will be removed. Therefore they want to spread communal feelings among them. In order to establish their own leadership they adopt wrong means and spread communalism in the name of freedom.'³³

The intractable policy of the League prompted Nehru to enquire from Jinnah what actually he was aiming at. The latter, in his press statements was throwing out challenges, saying that he was fighting the Congress leadership which was misleading the people. 'I would beg Mr Jinnah,' said Nehru in a statement on New Year's Day, 1938, 'to remember what the Congress is today. It is very different from what it was in the days when he was associated with it. During this period, it has grown remarkably and is today an organization with thirty-one lakhs of members actually on its rolls, of whom about a hundred thousand are Muslims. It influences scores of millions of others.'³⁴ He wanted to know from Jinnah what exactly were the points in dispute which required consideration.

Jinnah did not refer to his demands in his correspondences with Nehru but advised the latter to realize 'what the main points in dispute are because they have been constantly mentioned both in the press and public platform even very recently.'³⁵ The League papers, by then; were pouring forth numerous demands, such as, withdrawal of all opposition to the Communal Award, adequate representation of Muslims in provincial services where the Congress was in power, protection of Muslim Personal Law, the right to call *Azan* and perform religious ceremonies, their undoubted right to slaughter cows, abolition of *Bande Mataram* as the national anthem, use of Urdu, and representation of Muslims with adequate weightage in all the local and elected bodies from top to bottom, etc.³⁶ While all these demands were really inconsequential, the League propaganda presented them in a way that provoked religious fanaticism. Jinnah's prime objective was purely political, tinged with something personal, even though he upheld the superficial demands of his community as its leader. All that he wanted to win from the Congress was a recognition that the Muslim League was the only authoritative and representative political organization of the Mussalmans of India, with, of course, himself as its undisputed leader. Challenging Nehru's claim that there were only two parties in the country, viz., the British Government and the Congress, Jinnah advanced his theory to President Bose that any future talks by Congress on Muslim desires or demands should be conducted only with the League. On 2 August 1938, he wrote to Bose:

It was considered necessary by the Executive Council [of the Muslim League] to inform the Congress of the basis on which the negotiations between the two organizations could proceed. . . . The Council is aware of the fact that there is a Congress Coalition Government in N.W.F.P. and also there are some Muslims in the Congress organization in other provinces. But the Council is of opinion that these Muslims in the Congress do not and cannot represent the Mussalmans of India, for the simple reason that their number is very insignificant and that as members of the Congress they have disabled themselves from representing or speaking on behalf of the Muslim community.³⁷

It was impossible for the Congress to accept Jinnah's claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative of the Indian Muslims. Protracted talks between Congress leaders and Jinnah, which had gone on for long, for an amicable understanding regarding the future of the nation thus came to nothing. Going further in his crusade, Jinnah thought it wise to criticize Gandhi for having given the Congress a Hindu outlook and Hindu ideals. In its 26th session held at Patna in the last week of December 1938, the League also discussed the need of a civil disobedience movement in Bihar, the United Provinces, and the Central Provinces as a protest against the so-called Congress persecution of the Muslims.

The situation in the country, because of national and international developments, was getting more and more tense when the Congress met in its annual session at Tripuri in the Central Provinces in March 1939. Many in the Congress were not happy with the functioning of the provincial Congress ministries who, in their turn, were finding it hard to proceed with constructive innovations in view of financial and administrative restraints. Popular movements, in the meantime, were taking a definite shape in the Indian States and there was a need to integrate that movement with the national struggle for freedom. The European situation, rapidly taking turn for the worse, caused no less concern in Congress circles. In case war came, it was only the Congress that could face the eventualities, but, for this, the organization required tremendous internal strength. It was a matter for serious consideration as to how far India would fall in with British foreign policy in the coming international crisis. It was necessary for the Congress High Command to face the growing problems squarely, as a homogeneous body, and constantly keeping the ultimate goals in view.

But during and immediately after the Tripuri session some ideological differences within the hard core of the top leadership came to surface rather suddenly, leading to the resignation of Subhas Chandra Bose from the presidency of the Congress on 29 April 1939, at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Calcutta, 29 April–1 May. Rajendra

Prasad was elected President and formed a new Working Committee with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Jamnalal Bajaj, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Jairamdas Daulatram, J.B. Kripalani, Bhulabhai J. Desai, Shankarrao Deo, Hare Krushna Mahtab, Bidhan Chandra Roy and Prafulla Chandra Ghosh as members. Making an appeal for unity, Jawaharlal Nehru said:

The world at present is heading towards a crisis. A world war may come on us at any moment. We should consider all the problems confronting us today with a calm and cool mind. We have also to consider the issues which will arise in case a world war breaks out. . . . The Congress has gathered great strength and has become a mighty organisation. Our enemies, too, are not sitting idle. They are trying to present a united front against us. The communal problem and the question of the Indian States stand in the way of our progress. . . . We must think calmly of all these issues. We must sink our differences and stand united in this hour of crisis.³⁸

The real crisis came within months. On 3 September 1939, the viceroy announced to the world that India was at war with Germany.

3. The Coming of War: The Prelude to Crisis

The outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 created little surprise in world capitals since it had been expected ever since Adolf Hitler captured power in Germany on 30 January 1933. Before coming to power he had made the character of his Nazi movement well known to all, and after becoming the dictator of his country, he moved most swiftly to lead it into war. By the time Neville Chamberlain succeeded the ailing Baldwin as Britain's Prime Minister in May 1937, Germany had armed to the teeth, the League of Nations was virtually defunct, and Hitler's fascist allies in Italy and Spain were at the high tide of aggressive triumph. On the other hand, the demoralized governments of Britain and France stood helplessly by, while their enemies prepared for a final onslaught. Early in 1938 Hitler absorbed Austria. In September came the Munich episode wherein the fate of Czechoslovakia was sealed. In March 1939, Germany took over that country.

During all those sordid tragedies the Indian National Congress expressed its grave concern over the Nazi-Fascist threats to world peace. From Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia and Franco's capture of power in Spain to Chamberlain's betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich and Hitler's ultimate destruction of that republic, the Congress criticized both aggression and appeasement and finally decided to dissociate itself from the foreign policy of imperialist Britain. In course of time, many forward-looking Congressmen came to regard the coming war as a war between the two opposing wings of the same vicious system — imperialism; between those who aimed at world domination and those

who were already dominating the world. For subjugated humanity, fascism and imperialism were like the two sides of the same coin.

Since it was fascism that was on the offensive, the world conscience, of necessity, went against it, in apprehension of what a war would mean. Only a few weeks before the outbreak of the war, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter to Herr Hitler, impelled as he was by a call from within. It was a piece of advice from one who was known as an apostle of non-violence to the one who was the very incarnation of violence:

It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the whole world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state. Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success? Anyway I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you.³⁹

For reasons unknown, the authorities did not allow this letter to reach Berlin. It speaks, however, of how Gandhi regarded the German dictator as the would-be creator of a destruction that would bring hell to humanity.

On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland. On 3 September Britain and France declared war on her. The same day the viceroy announced that India was at war with Germany. He did not think it constitutionally necessary either to consult the legislatures or the provincial ministries because, as he thought, with Britain at war India was also automatically at war and, therefore, there was no point in initiating a declaration of war by the viceroy in consultation with anyone. Working on that hypothesis, Linlithgow took India to war without trying to fathom the possible feeling of the Congress or of the people against such an authoritarian action. When criticized for this later by even some of his own countrymen, the viceroy justified his decision by asking what would have happened if the Congress had refused his request as it certainly would have done at a moment when some other elements had already backed the empire and the Princes had 'thrown themselves at the feet of the King-Emperor'?

Having made the announcement, Linlithgow requested Gandhi to meet him for a discussion and the latter met him the next day. The war had shocked Gandhi for the incalculable violence it was to let loose and he frankly expressed his personal sympathy for Britain in that hour of extreme distress. But as for the policy with regard to the war, he would not say anything since it was a matter for the Congress to decide. Linlithgow was deeply moved by the 'great emotion' which Gandhi showed when he feelingly spoke of the possibility of the bombing of the Westminster Abbey or the Westminster Hall, and confessed that he thought of the war 'with an English heart'.

Next, the Mahatma gave the viceroy a bit of his mind about the British hand behind the communal tangle, expressing his fear that the British would never desire to see a unified, self-governing India and would ever continue to exploit the Muslim anxieties and communal differences in order to stay on.

The hour of crisis had indeed struck in Indo-British relations. There could be no uncertainty in the viceroy's mind about the Congress opposition to the war effort. Princely India was of course with him. But, much depended on the support of the Muslim League when Congress support was out of question. The same day that Linlithgow met Gandhi, he also met Jinnah. The discussion centred on strengthening each other's hand and the viceroy asked the League president a piquant question: Would he like him 'to turn the Congress Ministries out'? 'Yes,' replied Jinnah forthwith. 'Turn them out at once. Nothing else will bring them to their senses. Their object, though you may not believe it, and though I did not believe it till two years ago, is nothing less than to destroy both you British and us Muslims. They will never stand by you.'⁴⁰ On that day, 4 September 1939, Jinnah told Linlithgow that the real escape from the prevailing deadlock lay in the partition of the country.

The Congress was in no mood for any understanding with the British, nor were the general public. Within a day of Gandhi's meeting with the viceroy, the Mahatma was greeted with the slogans, 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' and 'We do not want any understanding'. The Congress Working Committee, too, advised him similarly. Gandhi assured the nation that there was no question of any understanding at a personal level when grave national issues were involved. 'I have returned from the Viceregal Lodge empty-handed and without any understanding, open or secret. If there is to be any understanding, it would be between the Congress and the Government.'⁴¹ Nehru was on a brief visit to China when the war broke out. He cut short the visit and hastened back. At an interview to the press at Rangoon on 8 September he said:

We do not approach the problem with a view to taking advantage of Britain's difficulties. This war is going to change the face of things. The old order is dead and cannot be revived. If we are making for a new order let us do so consciously, defining it clearly and acting up to it from now onwards. . . . The real test as to whether this struggle is for democracy does not lie in the loud enunciations of the principles but in the practice. If England stands for self-determination the proof of that should be India.⁴²

Nehru returned to India on 10 September.

The Congress Working Committee met in an urgent session at Wardha on 8-15 September to decide its policy in regard to the war. Besides

the members of the Working Committee, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, M.S. Aney, Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash Narayan were present by special invitation. On 14 September, the committee passed the following significant resolution:

The Congress has . . . laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use India's resources, for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. . . . The people of India have, in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic state in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her and such limited freedom as she possesses taken away from her.⁴³

The Congress wanted to know in clear terms whether the war was being fought by Britain and her allies in order to defend their imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges, or to end imperialism and establish full democracy in their own possessions. If the latter was the case, the Indian people should have the right to exercise self-determination by framing their own constitution through a constituent assembly without external interference. It was only a free democratic India which could associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression. In the light of this necessity, the Working Committee invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims were in regard to democracy and imperialism and how those aims were going to be applied to India and given effect to immediately. 'The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future,' declared the Working Committee.

The stand of the National Congress left no doubt in the viceroy's mind that a political crisis was imminent. The Muslim League, on the other hand, was waiting for the war policy of the Congress to be announced before coming forward with its own bargaining counter for negotiation with the British. Within four days of the announcement of the Congress resolution, the Working Committee of the League passed a resolution saying:

The Committee express their deep sympathy for Poland, England and France. The Committee, however, feels that real and solid Muslim co-operation and support to Great Britain in this hour of her trial cannot be secured successfully if His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy are

unable to secure to the Mussalmans justice and fair play in the Congress-governed provinces where today their liberty, person, property and honour are in danger and even their elementary rights are most callously trampled upon.⁴⁴

The League urged the government to exercise their special powers which were lying dormant and obsolete under the threat of the Congress High Command. Further, in order to counteract the Congress demand for a constituent assembly, the League leaders demanded an assurance from His Majesty's Government that 'no declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made without the consent and approval of the All-India Muslim League nor any constitution be framed and finally adopted by His Majesty's Government and the British Parliament without such consent and approval.'⁴⁵

There was no doubt that, with the declaration of war, the central government would encroach upon provincial autonomy in many ways at their will. Sardar Patel, therefore, advised all the Congress prime ministers not to allow their responsibilities to be overridden. A draft resolution for the Congress-dominated provincial assemblies was prepared to express regret that

the British Government have declared India as a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany, without the consent of the Indian people and without consulting this Assembly. The Assembly considers this declaration, made in complete disregard of the opposition from Indian opinion, a contravention of the spirit of provincial autonomy, as also further measures adopted and laws passed in England and India limiting the powers and activities of Provincial Governments.⁴⁶

The viceroy, on the other hand, sure of the support of the princes and the League, did not pay much heed to the Congress terms. On 26 September, Gandhi met him at Simla and during a discussion lasting more than three hours, tried to make him agree to only two specific demands, namely, a declaration of the British intentions after the war, and an immediate sharing of power with the Indians. While Linlithgow remained unmoved, Lord Zetland in England announced it on 27 September in the House of Lords that 'the time has been ill chosen by the leaders of the Congress for a reiteration of their claims'. 'If Lord Zetland's speech represents the mind of the English people or Government,' rejoined Nehru, 'I have no hesitation in saying that there can be no compromise between the Congress and the British Government now or a thousand years hence.'⁴⁷

It was the viceroy who finally put an end to Congress expectations. In his statement on 18 October 1939 he made quite clear that the intentions

and aims of His Majesty's Government remained what they had been when the Act of 1935 was adopted:

That Act was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which it was possible to obtain at the time when it was framed. It was based, as is well known to all of us, on the common labours of British and Indian statesmen, and of representatives of British India as well as of the Indian States over a long period of years. . . . And I am authorised now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties, and interests in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and co-operation in the framing of such modifications as may seem desirable.⁴⁸

The viceroy's attitude showed that the British were not prepared to recognize the changes since 1935 in the political life of the country. It was of no consequence to them that the Congress had swept the polls and had come to power in the majority of the provinces. It was equally of no relevance to them that a gigantic war effort was not possible without popular support through popular governments. The British, it seemed, were hopeful of mobilizing India for war without the Congress ministries, and in case of a deadlock with them, were ready to see them out. Possibly, they were optimistic enough to face the crisis even with a hostile Congress in total opposition. With scant regard for that body, the viceroy soon decided to face the war with the help of a 'consultative group', representing major political parties and the Indian Princes under his own presidentship.

Gandhi thought the viceroy's declaration profoundly disappointing. It would have been better, he felt, had he not made any declaration at all. There was obviously the same old desire to play the policy of divide and rule, and that there was to be no democracy for India if Britain could prevent it was clear. 'Another Round Table Conference is promised at the end of the war. Like its predecessor it is bound to fail. The Congress asked for bread and it has got a stone,' commented Gandhi.⁴⁹

The government having stood rigid, the Congress decision on the next step could not be postponed any longer. Within five days of the viceroy's announcement, the Working Committee met at Wardha, and describing it as 'in every way unfortunate', passed a resolution stating: 'In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations.'⁵⁰ The resignation being only the first step towards a future course of action, the Congress decided to strengthen itself internally with discipline and faith in non-violence.

By the end of October the popular ministries in all the Congress majority provinces tendered their resignation and the governors in those provinces assumed power under Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935. In Bengal, Punjab and Sind, the non-Congress ministries continued to function as before, and in Assam, a coalition ministry was formed under Muhammad Saadullah.

'The British Government,' commented Nehru while asking the people to be ready for the next step, 'have been put to the test and have failed. It seems that they have not learnt any lesson from the two years of co-operation with the Congress; nor have they learnt any lesson from the war.'⁵¹ As one by one the Congress ministries went out of office and provincial autonomy vanished, the old bureaucratic system asserted itself with even greater autocratic tendencies than before. But the experiment which had lasted more than two years, with elected representatives of the people in power, had not been in vain since the popular ministers had been able to break the traditional steel-frame of the Indian Civil Service and carry the administration nearer to people's needs. The civil service, no doubt, heaved a sigh of relief at the withdrawal of the Congress, but nevertheless found it difficult to do away with the new trends initiated by Congress governments. By the time the autonomy experiment collapsed, it had become obvious to intelligent groups in the service that the Congress ministries would not come back again on the old conditions. If at all they were to come, the time and the order would be very different. At that moment, the Congress, too, heaved a sigh of relief that it had 'freed itself from the trammels of office and from the bondage of the Act of 1935'. With the shackles gone, it felt free to march forward for real freedom.

In the days of the Congress resignation, it created no surprise that the Muslim League did not reject the viceroy's statement. But the surprise came when the League expressed satisfaction that the viceroy had repudiated the claim of the Congress that it alone represented all India, and that the government had recognized the League as the true representative of the Indian Muslims. When Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad met the viceroy on 1 November to discuss new arrangements in the provincial sphere as a prelude to co-operation at the centre, Linlithgow pointed out that it was the lack of agreement between the two major communities which did not allow him to think of any arrangement beyond a 'consultative group'. He further clarified that any arrangement at that time should be only on an *ad hoc* basis, since wider reforms would have to wait till the war ended.

The Congress, by now, had two fronts to face because of the respective attitudes of the British and the League. While its struggle with the former could be conducted in the Gandhian way of non-violent non-

cooperation or civil disobedience, its activities and attitude *vis-à-vis* an internal communal party posed indeed a problem of problems. Jinnah was on the warpath. On 2 December 1939 he issued an appeal from Bombay to his followers to celebrate the fall of the Congress governments, saying: 'I wish the Mussalmans all over India to observe Friday the 22nd December as the 'Day of Deliverance' and thanksgiving as a mark of relief that the Congress regime has at last ceased to function.'⁵² Public meetings were to be held at various places to express the opinion of the League that the Congress ministries had conclusively demonstrated and proved the falsehood of the Congress claim that it represented all interests justly and fairly. Jinnah's resolution to be read out on that day declared,

That the Congress Ministry, both in the discharge of their duties of the administration and in the legislatures have done their best to flout the Muslim opinion, to destroy Muslim culture, and have interfered with their religious and social life, and trampled upon their economic and political rights; that in matters of differences and disputes the Congress Ministry invariably have sided with, supported and advanced the cause of the Hindus in total disregard and to the prejudice of the Muslim interests.

The Day of Deliverance was intended to mark the emancipation of the Muslims 'from tyranny, oppression and injustice during the last two and a half years'.

From this time onwards Jinnah tried to influence public opinion in England and to draw sympathy towards his cause by virtue of his stand in support of the war effort. In an article for the *Time and Tide*, London, he wrote in January 1940:

Democratic systems based on the concept of a homogeneous nation such as England are very definitely not applicable to heterogeneous countries such as India and this simple fact is the root cause of all India's constitutional ills. . . . The British people, being Christian, sometimes forget the religious wars of their own history and today consider religion as a private and personal matter between man and God. This can never be the case in Hinduism and Islam, for both these religions are definite social codes which govern not so much man's relation with his God as man's relation with his neighbour.⁵³

In this article, he expressed his views about a new constitution for India which would recognize two nations to share 'the governance of their common motherland'. A brief time now stood between his idea of sharing power within a common motherland and his demand for complete separation.

Jinnah's 'deliverance day' came to Gandhi as the shock of his life; the irrationality that made it possible that the Muslims could be made to recite before God their supposed allegations against the Congress appalled him. That religion should be brought into politics to that extent was a serious matter. Moreover, Jinnah's picture of India as a continent 'containing nations counted according to their religions, if it is realised, would undo the effort the Congress has been making for over half a century', lamented the Mahatma.⁵⁴

Lord Linlithgow, having set the League to fight the Congress, decided to keep holding out the olive branch for as long as possible, inviting the contending parties to come to a compromise. 'I know, gentlemen,' he announced from Bombay on 10 January 1940,

that you appreciate the difficulty of the position of the Viceroy and the difficulty of the position of His Majesty's Government, faced as they are with strong and conflicting claims advanced by bodies and interests to whose views the utmost attention must be paid, and whose position must receive the fullest consideration. Justice must be done as between the various parties, and His Majesty's Government are determined to see justice done. . . . and I would venture again to emphasise the case for compromise. . . . As to the objective there is no dispute. . . . His Majesty's Government are not blind — nor can we be blind here — to the practical difficulties involved in moving at one step from the existing constitutional position into that constitutional position which is represented by Dominion Status. But here, again, I can assure you that their concern and mine is to spare no effort to reduce to the minimum the interval between the existing state of things and the achievement of Dominion Status.⁵⁵

To keep hopes alive, Linlithgow told K.M. Munshi that he was not going to wait till the end of the war for settling the Indian problem. He assured him that between Dominion Status of the Westminster variety and independence there was only a difference in name, and hoped that the Congress would come round to see the logic for a settlement. Munshi pointed out that the British had given the Muslims such undue importance that they were out to make extravagant claims and Jinnah had become so difficult that any friendly approach to him was impossible. He cautioned the viceroy that if there was no alliance between nationalist India and Britain at that hour of need, the Congress might go out, but then India would see the battle between Savarkar and Jinnah.⁵⁶

Invited by the viceroy to discuss matters afresh, Gandhi met him on 5 February 1940. And conscious of the futility of any discussion when the British were unwilling to negotiate on national issues without taking communal demands into consideration, he expressed his regret that the viceroy's latest proposals did not meet the full demand of the Congress party. The government and the Congress were proceeding in opposite directions with no ground for conciliation as long as the former sup-

ported the cause of the League, and did not accept the position that the time had come when India should determine her constitution without outside interference. 'We parted as friends. I have no disappointment in me that the negotiations have failed,' reported Gandhi to an army of pressmen.⁵⁷

The situation was grim when the Congress met in its fifty-third session at Ramgarh under the presidency of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on 19-20 March 1940. Mahatma Gandhi himself drafted the resolution on India and the War Crisis which was approved by the Working Committee. There were demands for an immediate launching of civil disobedience, but Gandhi advised caution since the country required preparation for it. 'I must make it clear,' he said, 'that I am not prepared to do anything for which I will have to repent. I have never acknowledged defeat throughout all these years in any of my struggles. . . . I can assure you and I promise you and publicly announce it, that when you are ready I shall march forth and then I have no doubt about victory.'⁵⁸

In an impassioned address, President Azad reminded the Congress of the internal and external problems which faced the nation, and urged his co-religionists to realize the value of the teachings and the splendid traditions of Islam in India, and how for centuries the Muslims had lived as the children of the soil, enjoying brotherhood with the Hindus in developing a common nationality. In order to dispel the fear complex, as a minority, from the Muslim mind, he pointed out that 'In four provinces out of eleven in India there is a Muslim majority, the other religious groups being minorities. If British Baluchistan is added, there are five provinces with Muslim majorities. Even if we are compelled at present to consider this question on a basis of religious groupings, the position of the Muslims is not that of a minority only. If they are in a minority in seven provinces, they are in a majority in five. This being so, there is absolutely no reason why they should be oppressed by the feeling of being a minority.'⁵⁹ Azad referred to the British hand behind the communal controversy, to their policy of divide and rule, and their constant attempt to convince the world that the question of the minority barred the way to a proper solution of India's political problems.

The official resolution of the Ramgarh Congress on war crisis was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru. It was seconded by J.B. Kripalani and supported by Vallabhbhai Patel. That the British made India a belligerent country without any reference to the people was considered an affront to them which no self-respecting and freedom-loving people could accept or tolerate. The policy of Britain was to carry on the war for imperialist ends for preservation of her empire.

Under these circumstances, [declared the resolution], it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be party to the war,

which means continuance and perpetuation of this exploitation. The Congress therefore strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain and of the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the war. Neither the recruiting nor the money raised in India can be considered to be voluntary contributions from India. Congressmen and those under the Congress influence cannot help in the prosecution of the war with men, money or material.⁶⁰

Nothing short of complete independence was once again declared as the goal of the Congress. With it, the demand for a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of adult suffrage, was reiterated with greater vehemence.

The Ramgarh session dissolved on 20 March 1940. Within three days, on 23 March, India was stunned at the news of the Lahore Resolution of the All-India Muslim League demanding the partition of India and creation of Pakistan. A day earlier, Jinnah propounded his doctrine saying: 'Muslims are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their home-lands, their territory and their state.'⁶¹ And, the resolution of the League passed unanimously at that historic session at Lahore the next day, famous as the Pakistan Resolution, said:

Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principle, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute 'independent states' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.⁶²

At the moment when the League prepared and passed this resolution, the Congress did not fully appreciate that it contained the germ of destruction of a united India. Nor could the authors of the resolution, including the Quaid-e-Azam, anticipate that the Pakistan they hoped for would emerge within the next seven years as a 'moth-eaten' and truncated land which, within another twenty-five years, would disintegrate into two states since the resolution, containing germs of self-destruction, had originally suggested 'independent states' in the Muslim majority areas in the north-western and eastern zones of India.

Jinnah's devastating demand immediately resulted in the hardening of the British attitude towards the Congress demands. Within a few days of the Pakistan resolution, Lord Zetland declared in a broadcast that 'no lasting settlement in India will be possible without real reconciliation between Muslims and Hindus.'⁶³ Indian politics thus took a

triangular shape with the British, the Congress and the League forming the three sides meeting each other at appropriate points to differ and disagree. The League, having gone to the farthest extent in its betrayal of the cause of nationalism, there could no longer be a common meeting ground between it and the Congress. Referring to its scheme of 'denationalising India', Nehru commented bitterly:

The whole problem has taken a new complexion and there is no question of settlement or negotiation now. The knot that is before us is incapable of being untied by settlement; it needs cutting open. It needs a major operation. Without mincing words, I want to say that we will have nothing to do with this mad scheme. I do not know what the consequences to the country would be. Who can say. . . . We will, of course, oppose the partition scheme, but our goal is clear and we will march on our path. A struggle is inevitable now.⁶⁴

Patel, too, felt that a final showdown with the British who were behind the entire episode of Muslim intransigence had to come, but the question was 'when to start the fight'. And, Master Tara Singh, presiding over a Sikh conference at Lucknow on 15 April said: 'If the Moslem League want to establish "Pakistan" they will have to pass through an ocean of Sikh blood.' Among the Muslims, too, many organizations and individuals reacted sharply to Jinnah's demand. They disputed the claim of the League to be the only representative of the Indian Muslims, and condemned the demand for India's partition. Men like Sikandar Hayat Khan and Allah Baksh showed their disapproval of the Lahore proposals. For the Congress Muslims, Jinnah's steps appeared the most disastrous not only for India but for Indian Muslims in general.

As a morbid atmosphere descended on the country, Gandhi found solace in the thought that rationality would prevail. 'I do not believe,' he said, 'that Muslims, when it comes to a matter of actual decision, will ever want vivisection. Their good sense will prevent them. Their self-interest will deter them. Their religion will forbid the obvious suicide which the partition would mean. The "two-nation" theory is an untruth. . . . Hindus and Muslims of India are not two nations. Those whom God has made one, man will never be able to divide.'⁶⁵

As India's internal politics entered a critical stage the war situation in Europe was developing dangerously. The tide of German invasion had proved irresistible, and Hitler's victory over Norway, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg in April-May 1940, signalled grave threats to the safety of England. The fall of France was a question of days and the battle for Britain was in sight. It was at that precarious hour that on 10 May 1940 Neville Chamberlain yielded place to Winston Churchill as Britain's war-time Prime Minister. Soon thereafter, L.S. Amery succeeded Lord

Zetland as the Secretary of State for India. The new premier received the first severe military blow when the British army was forced to evacuate France from Dunkirk on 27 May. But to most Englishmen, Churchill was the man of the hour and of destiny — the only man who commanded the confidence of the nation when the empire was in peril.

Churchill's view of the Indian empire as timeless and indestructible was not unknown to Indians. Nor was his hatred for Gandhi and the Congress a hidden secret. The only thing which was not known at that time was his feeling for Jinnah as a friend in need. To India in ferment, Churchill's assumption of power could be anything but propitious. As for Gandhi, he was face to face at last with his greatest adversary, to fight his greatest battle with him.

Gandhi, nonetheless, kept the Congress amenable to his line of cautious approach in tune with the moral fundamentals which he had always upheld as the *sine qua non* of Indian revolution. And, so, in spite of the Churchill administration's newer injunctions, the Congress decided to remain within the bounds of the leader's desire and not to precipitate action. Gandhi was still hopeful of a change in British attitude.

When France fell to German forces in mid-June, it came within the range of military possibility that the Mediterranean might have to be abandoned for strategic reasons and Egypt and Palestine evacuated. The British were also expecting to face the German and Italian air forces operating from Iraq, Arabia and Iran. In view of these omens, the new Secretary of State Amery advised the viceroy to negotiate some sort of a constitutional agreement with the Indian leaders before the Congress decided to act from a position of despair. He apprehended that the Congress would strike any moment on the presumption that the British empire was about to collapse. As Amery pointed out, the invasion of England was already on the German programme after their occupation of Belgium, Holland and France. It was necessary to guard India if and when England suffered that invasion.

The viceroy turned to Gandhi once again for a settlement. The latter was obliged to present the Congress demands as the basis for negotiation, as he had done before, and remained 'completely immovable' in his principled stand. Everything, thus, depended on whether Churchill would permit a new deal with the Congress. But in July 1940, the Prime Minister warned the viceroy saying: 'You must remember that we are here facing the constant threat of invasion with many strange and novel features. . . . In these circumstances immense constitutional departures cannot be effectively discussed in Parliament and only by the Cabinet to the detriment of matters touching the final life and safety of the State. I am sure that I can count upon you to help us to the utmost of your

power.⁶⁶ He declined to appease the Congress by agreeing to any date for the Dominion Status which the viceroy would have liked to keep alive as a topic of discussion with the Congress.

Linlithgow found himself, more or less, helpless between the opposite attitudes of the British Conservatives and the Indian Congress. But in order to prove British sincerity, he announced a scheme on 7 August 1940, which was also read in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State the next day. Famous as the August Offer, it proposed the expansion of the Executive Council and the establishment of a War Advisory Council, and suggested that soon after the war 'a body of representatives of principal elements in India's national life' be set up to frame a new constitution. With this, the viceroy disclosed the policy of the British regarding the future that 'they could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life'.⁶⁷

The Congress saw through the game which Churchill, Amery and Linlithgow had decided to play. Within a few days, the Working Committee rejected the offer saying that it not only did not fulfil the Congress demands but also blocked the way of achieving independence.⁶⁸ The hour of struggle having come nearer, the All-India Congress Committee decided on 15 September to give Gandhi the mandate for immediate and appropriate steps to face the crisis. The government decision to impose its will upon India against the people's desire, its ban on free expression of public opinion about war measures, and its determination to exploit the nation's resources and manpower for war purposes were no longer to be tolerated. It was left to Gandhi 'to guide the Congress in the action that should be taken' in face of the gravest challenges.

For Gandhi it was a moment of trial and test. He decided to conduct his action from the highest levels of moral values. 'I have made repeated statements', he declared at the All-India Congress Committee meeting on 15 September 1940, 'that I would not be guilty of embarrassing the British people or the British Government when their very existence hung in the balance, that I would not be true to my satyagraha, would not be true to non-violence, would not be true to the truth which I hold dear if I did so, and therefore could not do so.'⁶⁹ He did not want England to be defeated or humiliated. At the same time, he could not see India subjected to oppression and humiliation. In the larger interest of India and Britain, he therefore decided not to launch mass civil disobedience but a different type of satyagraha to bring the British to reason regarding the Congress stand for preservation of the honour and the elementary rights of the people.

Had the government at this time agreed to enter into a deal with the Congress, the crisis perhaps would not have deepened to prepare the path for Gandhi's final call to the British to go. But the viceroy showed no sign of a changed attitude when the Mahatma met him late in September at Simla for a negotiated settlement.

Gandhi next finalized his plan for individual civil disobedience. Vinoba Bhave was selected to be the first satyagrahi to inaugurate his new movement. On 17 October Vinoba, under strict discipline of virtuous conduct, began the civil disobedience by raising anti-war slogans in public to demonstrate the Indian feeling, and courted arrest on 21 October. Gandhi next announced the name of Jawaharlal Nehru as the second satyagrahi but Nehru was arrested on 31 October before he could play his part, not on charges of what he was about to do, but on charges of having made seditious speeches early in October in the United Provinces. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment. To the Congress this appeared a highly provocative action on part of the government, but Gandhi did not permit any widespread or serious reaction to it since he stood by his moral conviction that no disturbances should be caused during that novel movement. On the other hand, he decided to enlarge the scope of the movement by offering as satyagrahis all members of the Congress Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, and the Central and Provincial Legislatures. As the campaign widened, the leaders came forward for their pilgrimage to prison while the nation maintained absolute calm, in spite of great excitement and anger. Sardar Patel was arrested on 17 November. The Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad, was arrested on 3 January 1941 and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

Gandhi next called upon all representative Congressmen from the village committees down to provincial committees to join the movement and court imprisonment. The government, in order to obstruct the continuing flow of civil resisters into the prisons, resorted to imposing heavy fines on them. This created great hardship to rural Congressmen who were ready to respond to Gandhi's call. But the latter felt that the resisters should be prepared for any punishment. 'As a matter of fact it is the essence of civil disobedience that the resister becomes indifferent whether the authorities take away all his property or not,' he instructed.⁷⁰ His chief objective was to establish a conviction in Congressmen's mind that their success depended on 'the sum total of the purity and non-violence we are able to show in all our activities'. The struggle, as he knew, was not intended for an early conclusion.

By April 1941 Gandhi's call had gone down to the ordinary members of the Congress Party, the 'four-anna members'. When such members too came forward to suffer, it was seen that the vast rural masses were

rapidly becoming aware of the moral aspect of a non-violent revolution. Churchill, of course, comforted himself that India was calm while the war raged in full fury, but to Linlithgow, the calm of 1941 was like a lull before the storm. He was groping in the dark to find a way out.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the rapid advance of German forces towards Moscow brought a drastic change in the world strategic situation. In July, the viceroy reconstituted his Executive Council to consist of 8 Indian and 3 British members besides himself and the Commander-in-Chief. A National Defence Council of 30 members was also set up. These steps only annoyed the Congress more. In August the same year, the famous Atlantic Charter was announced to the world jointly by the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the British Prime Minister, Churchill, to comfort all nations with the hope of freedom after the war. But, to rub salt into India's wounds, Churchill declared in the House of Commons on 9 September that the provisions of the Charter would not affect British policy relating to India.

Since the Congress discontent was rapidly resulting in a popular hostility towards the administration, the viceroy could not remain a silent spectator to an ever-deepening crisis. Germany's initial successes in Russia, in the meantime, presented a potential threat to India through the Caucasus. The escape of Subhas Chandra Bose to Germany in January 1941 was also a matter of no small concern. Wavell, the new Commander-in-Chief, was not very confident about facing the eventual Indian upsurge, when it came, when troops from India were engaged outside. In an overall assessment of the popular temper, the viceroy thought it a grave risk to keep the national leaders in prison for minor technical offences.

'I have the greatest confidence in you,' cabled Churchill to Linlithgow on 1 August 1941 while offering him an extension of his term of office, 'the war is moving East and approaching a period which may well be one of the most dangerous in the history of the British trusteeship in India.'⁷¹ Linlithgow agreed to stay on and felt that Churchill's 'greatest confidence' perhaps meant a little freedom to act as the man on the spot in a troubled empire at a time of turmoil.

By mid-October, he completed the expansion of his Executive Council, and as a gesture of conciliation, released numerous jailed Congressmen from prison. Some of the new Indian members of his Council next prevailed upon him to release Nehru, Azad and other top leaders, to which the viceroy agreed. At this, a disturbed Churchill sent him a telegram expressing his distress:

I was startled to learn how far you had gone about the release of remaining *satyagrahi* prisoners. As you know I have always felt that a man like Nehru

should be treated as a political *detenu* and not as a criminal and have welcomed every mitigation of his lot. But my general impression of this wholesome release is one of surrender at the moment of success. Undoubtedly the release of these prisoners as an act of clemency will be proclaimed as a victory for Gandhi's party. Nehru and others will commit fresh offences requiring the whole process of trial and conviction to be gone through again. You will get no thanks from any quarter.⁷²

Linlithgow developed the courage to point out to Churchill that the issue of releasing the leaders was, at that moment, an issue of great political importance which could not be disposed of privately or 'settled between the viceroy and the Prime Minister'. On his behalf, Amery persuaded Churchill to agree, and reported to Linlithgow on 2 December: 'Winston looked round the room and then said somewhat sorrowfully "I give in", adding *sotto voce* "when you lose India don't blame me" or something to that effect.'⁷³

On 4 December 1941, the remaining civil disobedience prisoners, including Nehru and Azad, were set free. During the fourteen months which covered this phase of the Gandhian movement, about 25,000 Congressmen had suffered imprisonment, and many more thousands had paid exorbitant fines and suffered other tribulations in the cause. 'It is not good to come out of the narrow confines of a jail into the larger prison that is India today. The time will come surely when we break through and demolish all the prison walls that encompass our bodies and minds, and function freely as a free nation,' commented Nehru on being released.⁷⁴

The year was coming to a close with Japan's entry into the war with the destruction of the American fleet at Pearl Harbour on 6 December. This abruptly brought a new war situation to the doors of India, which neither the British nor the Congress could take casually. The very security and safety of India had been threatened. It was not a threat to the British Empire, but a threat to the Indian nation. Obviously enough, the opening of 1942 saw the beginning of a new phase in the Congress struggle.

4. The 'Quit India' Resolution

On 15 and 16 January 1942 the All-India Congress Committee met at Wardha where President Abul Kalam Azad reviewed the events that had taken place. During the previous fateful months the world had 'fallen ever deeper into the abyss of war and rushed headlong towards self-destruction' while the members of the committee remained in prison. The release of the Congress prisoners indicated no change in official policy. Though the government had released most of the satyagrahis, an unknown number of detenues had been kept in jails under the Defence of

India Act without trial. In view of the war reaching the frontiers of India, bringing new problems in its train, a resolution on the political situation was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of the Working Committee and was seconded by Rajagopalachari and passed. It said:

While there has been no change in Britain's policy towards India, the Working Committee must nevertheless take into full consideration the new world situation that has arisen by the development of the war into a world conflict and its approach to India. . . . But only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the large causes that are emerging from the storm of war. The whole background in India is one of hostility and of distrust of the British Government and not even the most far-reaching promise can alter this background nor can a subject India offer voluntary or willing help to an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from fascist authoritarianism.⁷⁵

On 15 February Singapore fell to the Japanese forces, and, on 8 March, Rangoon. The threat to India was imminent. 'The whole country is in distress,' said a perturbed Nehru on 11 March:

Everywhere you hear only this report that the Japanese army is numerically superior and it has more aeroplanes, arms and ammunition. But war is not won by raising a hue and cry. . . . It would be awkward for and unbecoming of us to bow down before the British Government. Whatever may happen, and let Indians and the independence of India go to hell, we will never bow down before the British or the Japanese. We will face the danger with courage and if called upon we will die. We will not disgrace ourselves, but face all dangers.⁷⁶

No less perturbed was Gandhi at the Japanese advance, though he thought of his own methods of dealing with the new invaders. When Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek and Madam Chiang Kai-Shek met the mahatma on 18 February to understand the latter's mind regarding Indian resistance to Japanese invasion, he gave them to understand that, whether Japan or Germany, the invader would be confronted with fierce non-cooperation or civil resistance. 'Your civil resistance', replied Chiang Kai-Shek, 'is not mere passivity, I am sure. But these foes may not listen to active civil resistance, and may make even the preaching of non-violence impossible.'⁷⁷ Gandhi was praying within himself for light on how exactly to react in case of invasion.

Winston Churchill was faced with one of the worst moments in his political career when the Japanese forces by land, sea and air were at the gates of his Indian Empire, and when the subject population gravely doubted if the British were able to defend them. Fast-moving events in the Far Eastern theatres of war, with sweeping Japanese victories and

the collapse of the Western powers in those regions, created in India an atmosphere of uncertainty, resulting in extreme anti-British feeling. The Congress leaders who were out of jails made no secret of their resolve that the country would not lend its support to the government, even if it faced an invasion. In view of this, and in order to buy time, as well as to please his American and Chinese allies, Churchill made a statement in the Commons on 11 March 1942 that Stafford Cripps, the Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons, would be soon sent to India on a one-man mission to negotiate a settlement with the Indian leaders. The real purpose was to holdout some promises and secure co-operation in the war. Cripps was carrying with him a new programme of constitutional reform, approved by the British war Cabinet.

Nobody expected that Cripps would succeed. It was yet another delaying tactic in face of danger, thought the Congress High Command. The viceroy too was certain that the mission would fail. Suspecting that Cripps was coming to grind his own axe for future greatness, Linlithgow confidentially said to H.V. Hodson, who recorded the words in his diary on 14 March:

No one would choose this way of becoming Viceroy if that were his ambition. And if he wants to be Prime Minister what sensible politician would take the immediate risks of failure over this just when his stock is very high? No, I think he realised that India might take things from him which they would not take from anyone else, and he is coming out here in a genuine public-spirited attempt to solve the problem. And I think he will go off very quickly unless he is confident of succeeding. It would be fatal to his reputation to hang around here while opinion hardens more and more against his offer — like hawking rotten fish.⁷⁸

Cripps arrived in Delhi on 22 March and in two days in the viceregal palace met all the governors and members of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Thereafter, moving to a private residence, he met the leaders of different political parties to win them over to the latest offer. In substance, what the Churchill Cabinet thought as 'a just and final solution' included such features as: Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities steps should be taken to set up in India an elected body to frame a new constitution; provision should be made for participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body; any province of British India that was not prepared to accept the new constitution should have the right to retain its present constitutional position subject to subsequent accession if it so desired; and, during the critical period which faced India and until the new constitution was framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as a part of their world war effort. It was further made clear that the object of the plan was the creation of a new

Indian Union to constitute a dominion associated with the United Kingdom; and that whether or not an Indian state decided to adhere to the constitution, it would be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements under the new situation.

No sooner was the plan put forward than the Congress Working Committee found in it a dangerous move to render real freedom an illusion. While the ninety million people of the Indian States were treated as mere commodities at the disposal of their rulers, the states themselves were to exist as enclaves of the British with foreign forces. To crown this, there was the novel principle of non-accession for any province which shattered the concept of Indian unity and served as an inspiration to the Indian States not to merge with the Indian Union. On 2 April, the Working Committee rejected the Cripps proposals without reservation. And, in his characteristic way, an unhappy Gandhi on 4 April advised Cripps to take the first plane home if that was what he brought for India.

After announcing the breakdown of discussions Cripps left India for England on 12 April. The next day Gandhi wrote from Sevagram, commenting upon that ill-fated proposal of Cripps:

It is a thousand pities that the British Government should have sent a proposal for resolving the political deadlock, which on the face of it, was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was a misfortune that the bearer should have been Sir Stafford Cripps, acclaimed as a radical among radicals and a friend of India. I have no doubt about his goodwill. He believed that no one could have brought anything better for India. But he should have known that at least the Congress would not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of secession the very moment it was taken. He knew too that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts each having different ideas of governance. It contemplated Pakistan, and yet not the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception.⁷⁹

Gandhi wished that Cripps had not come at all on that dismal mission. He came only to expose the ulterior British intention to Balkanize India, leaving a large portion of the subcontinent under their hegemony. 'How could the British Government, at this critical hour, have behaved as they did? Why should they have sent proposals without discussing them with the principal parties? Not one single party was satisfied. In trying to please all the proposals pleased none,' Gandhi wrote to Horace Alexander.⁸⁰

India at the departure of Stafford Cripps stood on the brink of a catastrophe as the ways of the British Government and the Congress finally parted. Even while Cripps was in Delhi, the Japanese menace was growing continuously. The Andaman Islands were captured by

them in latter part of March. Early in April, the British were expelled from Prome. Colombo in Ceylon was bombed on 5 April. The next day Vizagapatam and Cocanada were bombed. Trincomalee which harboured the British fleet was bombed on 9 April. The eastern sea-board of India lay exposed to Japanese warships in the Bay of Bengal. It was, as Nehru said, an 'hour of peril for India'.

The Congress leadership wondered, in fact, as to how Cripps could come to push the Congress to a point of no return when its co-operation was so sorely needed by Britain. He had the power to alter the proposal to accommodate at least some of the Congress desires, particularly in matters of Indian defence. But if he did nothing, it was not his fault but that of Churchill. The day before he left India, he confided to Louis Johnson who reported it to President Roosevelt:

Cripps with embarrassment told me that he could not change the original draft declaration without Churchill's approval and that Churchill had cabled him that he would give no approval unless Wavell and the Viceroy separately sent their own code cables unqualifiedly endorsing any change Cripps wanted. I never lost confidence until then. London wanted a Congress refusal. Why?⁸¹

London wanted a Congress refusal because Churchill till then as ever before did not want any compromise with that body. When the Japanese fell upon Singapore and Burma, President Roosevelt told him how he 'favoured termination of India's colonial status'. 'I reacted so strongly and at such length,' Churchill noted later about their conversation, 'that he [Roosevelt] never raised it verbally again.'⁸² But the president persisted through official channels. Churchill expressed his doubts whether anything could be done at all. On 4 March, only a few days before he announced the Cripps Mission, he wrote to Roosevelt:

We are earnestly considering whether a declaration of Dominion Status after the war, carrying with it if desired the right to secede, should be made at this critical juncture. We must not on any account break with the Moslems who represent a hundred million people and the main army elements on which we must rely for the immediate fighting. We have also to consider our duty towards thirty to forty million untouchables and our treaties with the princely states of India, perhaps eighty millions. Naturally we do not want to throw India into chaos on the eve of the invasion.⁸³

When Cripps was preparing for his Indian trip, Roosevelt suggested 'the setting up of what might be called a temporary government in India, headed by a small representative group, covering different castes, occupations, religions and geographies — this group to be recognised as a temporary Dominion Government.' This body could be charged with setting up a body to consider a more permanent government for

the whole country. 'Such a move', said the US President, 'is strictly in line with the world changes of the past half-century and with the democratic processes of all who are fighting Nazism.'⁸⁴ To help the Cripps mission in achieving substantial results Roosevelt appointed Louis Johnson as head of a new US Economic Mission to India, and named him as his personal representative there.

When the Cripps mission finally failed and Churchill tried to blame the Indians, an unhappy Roosevelt wrote:

The feeling on the contrary is almost universally held that the deadlock has been caused by the unwillingness of the British Government to concede to the Indians the right of self-government, notwithstanding the willingness of the Indians to entrust technical, military and naval defence control to the competent British authorities. American public opinion cannot understand why, if the British Government is willing to permit the component parts of India to secede from the British Empire after the war, it is not willing to permit them to enjoy what is tantamount to self-government during the war.⁸⁵

Roosevelt clearly anticipated the grave consequences of Churchill's negative attitude towards India and the Congress in face of Japanese successes and the serious military and naval setbacks of the allied powers. An angry Churchill, feeling offended and slighted at the President's attitude, decided to silence him on Indian affairs by saying: 'Anything like a serious difference between you and me would break my heart and surely deeply injure both our countries at the height of this terrible struggle.'⁸⁶

When a great Congress revolution began to loom large on the horizon as the weeks advanced after the Cripps debacle, a nervous Chiang Kai-Shek cautioned Roosevelt that 'the Indian situation has reached an extremely critical stage. . . . If India should start a movement against Britain or against the United States, this will cause a deterioration in the Indian situation from which the Axis powers will surely reap benefit.' Using strong language, the Chinese leader urged Roosevelt to bring pressure on Britain to grant immediate independence to India. Helplessly, Roosevelt asked Churchill what reply he should give Chiang.⁸⁷

It is in his reply of 31 July that Churchill exposed his opinion about the Congress:

We do not agree with Chiang Kai-Shek's estimate of the Indian situation. The Congress party in no way represents India and is strongly opposed by over ninety million Mohammedans, forty million untouchables, and the Indian States comprising some ninety millions, to whom we are bound by treaty. Congress represents mainly the intelligentsia of non-fighting Hindu elements, and can neither defend India nor raise revolt. The military classes

on whom everything depends are thoroughly loyal; in fact over a million have volunteered for the army and the numbers recently volunteering greatly exceed all previous records. Their loyalty would be gravely impaired by handing over the Government of India to Congress control. The reckless declarations of Congress have moreover given rise to widespread misgiving, even among its own rank and file.

The Government of India have no doubt of their ability to maintain order and carry on government with efficiency and secure India's maximum contribution to the war effort whatever Congress may say or even do, provided of course that their authority is not undermined.⁸⁸

Churchill declined to consider any fresh negotiation with the Congress beyond what Cripps had proposed. He continued to harp on his conviction that the Congress was not India, even if the outside world believed it to be so. It is surprising that so late as 1942, he considered the Congress as a body with no mass base, with no popular appeal, and having no ability to raise revolt.

Ever since Stafford Cripps left India, Gandhi had been in mental torment, thinking of his next course of action. The only idea he could entertain at that moment of ominous significance was the termination of British rule, irrespective of the consequences. No doubt, India would pass through a severe ordeal, but the nation must suffer it to find its own way out.

My firm opinion is [he told Horace Alexander on 22 April 1942] that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore and Malaya and Burma. That act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations and right-doing by India. Britain cannot defend India, much less herself on Indian soil with any strength. The best thing she can do is to leave India to her fate. I feel somehow that India will not do badly then.⁸⁹

As Gandhi was absorbed in the thought of his final struggle, the All-India Congress Committee met in Allahabad on 29 April–2 May to declare its stand afresh. When India was developing into a battleground between foreign armies fighting on her soil or on her frontiers, her defence was not subject to popular control. The committee, therefore, declared that: 'Not only the interests of India but also Britain's safety, and world peace and freedom demand that Britain must abandon her hold on India. It is on the basis of independence alone that India can deal with Britain or other nations.'⁹⁰ The Congress called upon the people to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them.

Early in May 1942, Japanese planes made two air raids on Bengal and two on Assam. Chittagong aerodrome and Imphal were the targets of

attack. About a hundred people were killed on each occasion, besides hundreds injured. A Japanese landing on the eastern coast seemed imminent to many. In this emergent situation, Nehru, Azad and Rajagopalachari thought of armed resistance, guerilla warfare and even of a scorched earth policy, if necessary. 'What will happen to your ahimsa when Jawaharlal openly advocates violence and Rajaji wants arms and military training for the whole nation?' Gandhi was asked. And, he replied: 'Twenty-two years' incessant preaching and practice of non-violence, however imperfect it has been, could not be suddenly obliterated by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajaji, powerful though their influence is. I am, therefore, not perturbed by the "apostasy" either of Jawaharlal or Rajaji. They will return to non-violence with renewed zest, strengthened by the failure of their effort.'⁹¹ Whispers were around that the Japanese were willing to help India to free herself from the British rule, but Gandhi dismissed such notions by saying that it was a folly to suppose that aggressors could ever be benefactors, and that India should not seek help from any power to win freedom.

Gandhi had no time to wait. Through May and June of 1942 he was expressing his view that the British should immediately withdraw from India. Since the British were not going to oblige him, he had to plan a mighty movement to oust them, but wanted to prepare the whole country for it. The leaders of the Congress were touring the provinces extensively to assess the popular mood for mass civil disobedience. By mid-June, Gandhi and Nehru, in their deliberations at Wardha, came to the conclusion that the Congress should concentrate on winning complete independence and the total withdrawal of British, without which there could be no solution to major problems, such as communal bitterness. Unless the final step was taken at the earliest, the situation would deteriorate progressively and rapidly, and go downhill to disaster'.

The communal situation was indeed getting worse. Jinnah and his colleagues like Muhammad Ismail Khan and Khaliquzzaman were getting more vocal in their demand that there could be no agreement between the Congress and the League until the former accepted the demand of Pakistan. To make the problem still more complicated, so great a Congress veteran as Rajagopalachari came to believe that, in the larger interest of India, the Congress should acknowledge the League claim for separation and start negotiation with it. For men like Patel and Rajendra Prasad, it was simply out of the question to entertain such ideas.

To avoid mounting complications, growing tension and ever-growing uncertainties, Gandhi thought that the only way to save India was by asking the British to go. He was not blind to the hard realities of the war situation and to the obvious military consequences that would follow a

British withdrawal. Therefore, he thought of alternative means of resisting invasion. And, to dispel the misapprehensions of the allied leaders who regarded Gandhi's demand for British withdrawal at that moment as dangerous, the Mahatma made his position clear to President Roosevelt in a letter on 1 July 1942, shortly before he placed his plan of action before the Congress:

In order to make my proposal fool-proof I have suggested that, if the Allies think it necessary, they may keep their troops, at their own expense in India, not for keeping internal order but for preventing Japanese aggression and defending China. So far as India is concerned, she must become free even as America and Great Britain are. The Allied troops will remain in India during the war under treaty with the free India government that may be formed by the people of India without any outside interference, direct or indirect.⁹²

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha from 6 July. After marathon discussions it finally passed its epoch-making resolution on 14 July asking the British to go:

Events happening from day to day and the experience that the people of India are passing through, confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately, not merely because foreign domination, even at its best, is an evil in itself and a continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the War that is desolating humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, fascism, militarism and other forms of imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.⁹³

Should this appeal fail, it was said, the Congress would then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength which it had gathered for the vindication of the people's political rights and liberty. The resolution concluded with the words:

Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji. As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the peoples of the United Nations, the Working Committee refers them to the All India Congress Committee for final decision. For this purpose the A.I.C.C. will meet in Bombay on 7th of August 1942.⁹⁴

Gandhi made an appeal to the Muslims, including believers in Pakistan, to join the mass movement to end British rule. He appealed to the British to declare India free and make that independence a reality. Side

by side, he defined his coming movement as an 'open rebellion' which should be 'as short and swift as possible'. 'I am lighting my own funeral pyre to end the agony,' he said.

The British were taken aback. So, too, were many Americans. There was only a gap of three weeks between the Wardha resolution of the Congress Working Committee and the All-India Congress Committee meeting to be held in Bombay. During those brief days, the English and the American press described Gandhi and the Congress in terms verging on the abusive. *The New York Times*, for example, even went to the extent of suggesting that by his movement Gandhi would invite more harm to his people than Chenghiz Khan had visited on them. Bitter feelings were expressed by Churchill's cabinet colleagues. On 26 July, Stafford Cripps assured the Americans: 'We cannot allow the actions of a visionary, however distinguished in his fight for freedom in the past, to thwart the United Nations' drive for victory in the East.' And, Amery told parliament on 30 July that 'the British Government, while reiterating their resolve to give the fullest opportunity for the attainment by India of complete self-government, cannot but solemnly warn all those who stand and believe in the policy adumbrated by the Congress Working Committee, that the Government of India will not flinch from their duty to take every possible step to meet the situation.'⁹⁵ 'Struggle — eternal struggle, that is my reply to Mr Amery and Sir Stafford Cripps,' declared Nehru.⁹⁶

The final decision on Gandhi's Quit India call now rested with the All-India Congress Committee. The viceroy had not the slightest doubt that the AICC would endorse it. He, therefore, started working upon his strategy without waiting for the AICC decision. Rising to the occasion as an astute tactician, worthy of Churchill's confidence, Linlithgow made full preparations to fall upon the revolution before it was launched. As a first step, he immediately started a propaganda campaign in India and abroad to justify strong measures against the Congress even before the AICC met. His next step was to be taken just after the passing of the Quit India Resolution by the AICC, when the All-India Congress Committee and all the provincial Congress committees would be declared unlawful. Simultaneously, Gandhi and all the members of the Working Committee were to be arrested in Bombay, after which the provincial governments would seize Congress committee offices and property and arrest all provincial leaders and organizers of any importance. Finally, to crush a leaderless revolution of the people, he thought of proclaiming the whole Congress unlawful and of promulgating an Emergency Powers Ordinance. Linlithgow even wanted to deport Gandhi and some others to Aden or Uganda, but gave up the idea because of Gandhi's poor health. Going further, in anticipation of Gandhi's fast unto death in

prison, if it came to that, he remained ready to put down the public reaction to it. 'Even a communique had been drafted, leaving the date and time blank, in case Gandhi did not survive. The code word used for the purpose was Operation Rubicon.'⁹⁷ With all preparations made, Linlithgow awaited the meeting of the AICC.

Never had the All India Congress Committee met in more critical circumstances than when it met on 7-8 August 1942 in Bombay. The Indian revolution was at its final point and the destiny of the nation hung in the balance. The whole country awaited with grave expectation the momentous decision of the High Command. In his opening address on 7 August, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad initiated discussion on the Quit India demand by announcing that the Congress demand did not mean the physical removal of all Britishers from India but only the transfer of charge. After the president's address, it was Gandhi who took the platform to raise his call to India. For the mahatma, it was a day of days in his life, and when he spoke he was pronouncing the death-knell of the British Empire:

The members of the All India Congress Committee are like members of Parliament representing the whole of India. The Congress from its very inception has not been of any particular group or any particular colour or caste or of any particular province. It has claimed ever since its birth to represent the whole nation and on your behalf I have made the claim that you represent not only the registered members of the Congress but the entire nation.⁹⁸

He explained at length the meaning of Quit India and the nature of his movement to follow and the discipline of non-violence to be maintained. 'I say, if you are prepared to pay the full price, pass this resolution, otherwise, do not pass it,' demanded Gandhi.

The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru the same day. While doing it he expressed the determination of the Congress with the words: 'The Congress is plunging into a stormy ocean and it would emerge either with a free India or go down. Unlike in the past, it is not going to be a movement for a few days, to be suspended and talked over. It is going to be a fight to the finish.'⁹⁹ In seconding the resolution Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel said: 'If America and England were still thinking that they could fight their enemies from India without the co-operation of 400 millions of people they were foolish. It must dawn on the people that this war was a peoples' war and they should fight for their country and their freedom.'

The next day, on 8 August, the resolution was passed. 'The Committee appeals to the people of India,' the resolution said, 'to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endur-

ance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of Indian freedom.'¹⁰⁰ Intuitively, as if the leaders knew that it might not be possible for them to issue instructions to the people in the days to come, they called upon every man and woman to function for himself or herself within the bounds of the general instructions of the High Command. 'Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India,' it was said.¹⁰¹

Gandhi congratulated the All India Congress Committee when the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority and asked the people to imprint a *mantra* in their hearts — 'Do or Die'. 'We shall either free India or die in the attempt,' he said impassionately, 'we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. . . . Take a pledge with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.'¹⁰²

The government was ready for action, the army and the police having been kept prepared to face a countrywide revolution. Working swiftly at the conclusion of the AICC meeting, on the morning of 9 August, the police arrested Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee. At 5 a.m. that morning Gandhi left the following message to the country:

Everyone is free to go the fullest length under ahimsa. Complete deadlock by strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis must go out to die not to live. They must seek and face death. It is only when individuals go out to die that the nation will survive. *Karengé ya marengé*.¹⁰³

Even when the Congress was discussing the Quit India Resolution on 7 August 1942, the Government of India passed that day a resolution in which it condemned the Congress for starting its mass struggle on the widest scale and described how the Congress Party had made dangerous preparations for unlawful and violent activities with directions concerning the interruption of communications and public utility services, for the organization of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of government servants, and for interference with defence measures, including recruitment. The resolution challenged the claim of the Congress to speak for India as a whole, and pointed out how its demand for British withdrawal would lead to an Axis attack from without, civil war within, the collapse of law and order, the outbreak of communal disturbances, and the dislocation of economic life.

In the view of the Government of India [declared the resolution], it is not too much to say that acceptance of the demand now put forward by the

Congress Party must mean the betrayal of the Allies, whether in or outside India, the betrayal in particular of Russia and China, the betrayal of those ideals to which so much support has been given and is given today from the true heart and mind of India, the betrayal of India's fighting men, whose glory is so great, and the betrayal of all those loyal and co-operating elements in India which do not support the Congress party, but which have played so active and so valuable a part in the prosecution of the War.¹⁰⁴

A fellow prisoner in the train while Gandhi was being taken to his prison destination passed over a newspaper to him which contained the government resolution. The Mahatma was shocked. In extreme anguish, he wrote to the viceroy from his place of confinement in the Aga Khan Palace on 14 August saying:

The Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis. The Government resolution justifying this step is full of distortions and misrepresentations. . . . The Government of India should have waited at least till the time I inaugurated mass action. I had publicly stated that I fully contemplated sending you a letter before taking concrete action. . . . The precipitate action of the Government leads one to think that they were afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which the Congress was moving towards direct action might make world opinion veer round to the Congress, as it had already begun doing, and expose the hollowness of the grounds for the Government's rejection of the Congress demand.

And, sharply criticizing the government charge that the Congress had made advance preparations for unlawful and violent activities, Gandhi wrote: 'This is a gross distortion of the reality. Violence was never contemplated at any stage. A definition of what could be included in non-violent action has been interpreted in a sinister and subtle manner, as if the Congress was preparing for violent action.'¹⁰⁵

India suddenly plunged into a revolution the moment the news of the arrests flashed out. The government too swung into action to arrest unnumbered Congressmen all over the country. Congress Committees were declared unlawful associations. The intention was to deny to the people any guidance or direction from any recognized source in order to render them ineffective. But the policy misfired as the people rose in spontaneous nationwide upheaval to defy a government that had been asked to quit. 'I am engaged here,' wrote a perplexed viceroy on 31 August 1942 to an anxious Prime Minister, 'in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security.'¹⁰⁶

The authorities paid the most vigilant attention to the sources of disturbances. To their surprise and utter dismay, they saw that the movement was a grassroots one, where any kind of leadership was

unnecessary. It was the ordinary Congressmen, supported by common men who conducted the movement in numerous small towns all over the country and in hundreds of thousands of villages. The power of the Congress and the influence of Gandhi had spread to the rural areas to such extent that a mass upsurge was inevitable when the final call for it came. In no time, therefore, people worked as their own leader and came forward for action in their own way. At many places action committees were formed to regulate and conduct the movement. The leaders of the Congress left wing, who could manage to go underground for some time, fanned the fire from their unknown hideouts. Other revolutionary parties took the best advantage of the situation to paralyse the administration. Inflammatory literature emanated from secret sources, students in great number came out on the streets everywhere, workers launched strikes, meetings and processions became regular features, government officials and employees felt demoralized, smaller officers in rural areas went into hiding, and administration at several places completely broke down. Underground camps with dedicated volunteers began to function in mobilizing the active movement of the youth, workers, students, and peasants. Revolution was assuming a more comprehensive character. Men like Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Yusuf Meherally A.S. Patwardhan, Ram Nandan Misra, Surendra Nath Dwivedi and others had trained their followers for tireless endeavour among the people to keep the movement going.

Force was the only method left to Linlithgow to suppress the movement. Serious reports were reaching the viceroy about major interferences with railway lines and interruption of communication. When Patna was about to be cut off, and the viceroy found it impossible to move troops to the affected areas in time, he decided upon operations from the air without permission from London. On 15 August, he wrote to Amery:

'I have authorised machine-gunning from air of saboteurs. We shall, I fear, almost certainly have to resort to this weapon in other areas also, if attack on communications develops on a serious scale, as now begins to seem possible. But I have given instructions that any reference to this, if at all practicable, must be kept out of statements to Press. In the ordinary way, I should of course have been anxious to consult you before authorising action of this character, but situation on the reports received, is one that calls for immediate handling, and I have had no hesitation in taking my decision.¹⁰⁷

The situation in bigger cities like Bombay, Delhi, Nagpur, Allahabad, Calcutta and Dacca necessitated firing. So, too, in remote inaccessible rural areas. The strain on the police and security forces was proving too heavy. The viceroy felt alarmed at the signs of breakdown of

communication and transport systems in a country of the size of India. His only prayer to the Churchill government was for more power to apply force, which, of course, was granted without hesitation.

The Indian revolution in no time became a subject of hot discussion in the world press. While most conservative papers criticized the Congress and approved of government measures, there were prudent suggestions, too, calling for moderation. For example, the *Manchester Guardian* commented at the beginning of the outbreak: 'A wise Government will be looking beyond its police and troops to the possibilities of restoring real peace to India. It is ridiculous to speak as though we should never again negotiate with the Congress.'¹⁰⁸ The Chinese press was critical of the British move against the Congress while expressing sympathy for the Indian cause. 'We receive the news of the arrest of Mr Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad with regret. We cannot refrain from appealing to the British Government in India to exercise forbearance and continue to look for a real settlement,' observed the *Central Daily News*, Chungking, on 12 August, and the *Ta Kung Pao* commented: 'India's struggle for freedom is identical with the war aims of the United Nations and we have no reason not to be sympathetic.'¹⁰⁹

Winston Churchill was anxiously following both the course of the revolution and of repression while his countrymen were getting impatient of his silence. At last on 10 September 1942, he was obliged to make a special statement to Parliament, which was his first reference to India after the Quit India resolution. He harped upon his self-established theory that 'The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organisation built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests.' He tried to convince the House that 90 million Muslims, 50 million depressed classes, and 95 million subjects of the princes of India were fundamentally opposed to the Congress. He blamed the Congress for its deviation from non-violence, for its open revolutionary movement designed to paralyse communications and to promote disorder even by revolting atrocities, and for hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invader who stood on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal. Asking his listeners to believe that 'these activities by the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese fifth-column work on a widely extended scale', he comforted them saying: 'Acts of pillage and arson are being repressed and punished with an incredibly small loss of life. Less than 500 persons have been killed over this mighty area of territory and population and it has only been necessary to move a few brigades of British troops here and there in support of the civil power.' But the Prime Minister, while trying to assure Parliament about the future safety of the empire, contra-

dicted himself in the same breath when he concluded: 'I may add that large reinforcements have reached India and that the number of white soldiers now in that country, although very small compared with its size and population, are larger than at any time in the British connection. I therefore feel entitled to report to the House that the situation in India at this moment gives no occasion for undue despondency or alarm.'¹¹⁰

Hardly could Churchill have anticipated at that moment, and when the movement had gone on only for a month, that the August Revolution of 1942 was preparing the path to the great event of August 1947 when his empire was to fade into history.

Churchill's statement in Parliament was received with extreme resentment in India. In Britain, too, there was bitter criticism of his policy. But, undaunted, he continued to lend support to the viceroy to fight the Indian people, even if the administration was beginning to collapse at many places and people's suffering continued to mount.

The actual number of people who sacrificed their lives in the Quit India movement could never be ascertained because of blackout of the news and official reluctance to keep accurate records. By the end of September, the Government of India very hesitatingly informed the 'home' government that the casualty figure stood at 786. By November the official statistics showed 1,028 killed and 3,125 seriously wounded. Few believed those official versions since there were firings on as many as 538 occasions by the police and the military, besides an unknown number of machine-gunnings from the air on thousands of people. The government also did not disclose the actual number of forces deployed. Their reference to the use of eight British brigades and 57 Indian battalions for crushing the movement was considered grossly understated. The real dimensions of the British operation to contain the revolution thus remained hazy. Though brute force succeeded in driving the revolution to a state of suspended animation, the spirit of 1942 persisted till the end of the Raj. By their struggle and suffering, the people of India demonstrated to the world the fact that British rule had already run out its course in India.

The most distressed person in those tumultuous days of heroic struggle and limitless sacrifice was Mahatma Gandhi, then in detention in the Aga Khan Palace, Pune. It was not only the blood of the innocent brave which deeply moved him, but the calumny which the government spread about the patriots, depicting them as fifth-columnists or saboteurs, or the way they described the Congress movement as an organized movement for violence. Equally painful was the manner in which the British were building up the power of the Muslim League and encouraging communal bitterness, indicating thereby what they wanted to do with India after the war. Gandhi could not keep silent when his

conscience was in revolt. 'Contrary to the biblical injunction,' he at last wrote to Linlithgow on the last day of 1942, 'I have allowed many suns to set on a quarrel I have harboured against you, but I must not allow the old year to expire without disburdening myself of what is rankling in my breast against you.' He wanted to hear from the viceroy of his own error or errors for which he had been so much condemned, or else, like a true satyagrahi, he would 'crucify the flesh by fasting'.¹¹¹

Replying late on the advice of Amery, the viceroy repeated his charges against Gandhi and the Congress for the violence and crime that took place because of their movement, and wanted to know if 'in the light of what has happened you wish now to retrace your steps and dissociate yourself from the policy of last summer'.¹¹²

The Gandhi-Viceroy correspondence with charges and counter-charges ended on the note that there was no need from the side of the government for any negotiations to find a solution. Gandhi wanted the government to retrace its steps, and not the Congress or himself personally, but the viceroy continued to charge that Gandhi and the Congress were squarely responsible for all the violence and disorder. A prisoner helpless to do anything about what was going on, including the privations of millions, owing to the great food scarcity stalking the land, Gandhi decided to go on fast, as 'an appeal to the Highest Tribunal for justice', not as 'a form of political blackmail' as the viceroy thought it. 'Posterity will judge between you as representative of an all-powerful Government and me as a humble man who has tried to serve his country and humanity through it,' he wrote to Linlithgow on 7 February 1943.¹¹³

Two days later, on 9 February 1943, Mahatma Gandhi began his three-week fast in the Aga Khan Palace. It was his thirteenth fast and the fifth major one. It was also his fifth fast in Pune. Aged and weak, suffering great mental agony, the long fast was a grave risk to his life. No previous fast had caused so much anxiety to his doctors and to no other had the people's reaction been so widespread and roused such deep emotions among them as this one did. As the fast advanced, one of India's most renowned physician, Bidhan Chandra Roy felt constrained to say that the mahatma was 'very near death'.

A gloom fell over the country as the government remained totally indifferent to what might happen. Another political crisis seemed certain. President Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, instructed the new American representative in India, William Phillips, to meet the viceroy to express their deep concern. 'Please express to His Excellency our hope,' their telegram said, 'that a means may be discovered to avoid the deterioration of the situation which would be almost certain to occur if Gandhi dies.'

When Phillips asked Linlithgow what would happen if Gandhi died,

the viceroy explained that there would be six months of unpleasantness, steadily declining in volume. After that India would be a far more reliable base for major war operations eastwards. Moreover, said the viceroy, the prospect of a settlement in India would be greatly enhanced by the disappearance of Gandhi, who had for years torpedoed every attempt to reach one.¹¹⁴

As the government remained callous, people clamoured for Gandhi's release in deep anger and resentment. In protest against the viceroy's attitude, three leading Indian Members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, H.P. Mody, N.R. Sarkar, and M.S. Aney, tendered their resignations when the fast had gone on for nine days. Unconcerned, the government took a further offensive step by issuing a paper on 22 February on the 'Congress responsibility for 1942 disturbances'. By that time Gandhi's condition had turned so grave that the doctors, in their bulletin, announced that if the fast was not ended without delay, it might be too late to save his life.

Evidence was not lacking that the government desired to see the fast ending in death. Elaborate police and military precautions were taken to cope with the expected disorders. And, among several stories which got circulated from mouth to mouth, one persistent report referred to the government preparation for the cremation of Gandhi with huge quantities of sandalwood stored in advance. When Horace Alexander, an English friend of Gandhi, tried to mediate between the dying leader and an adamant viceroy, his efforts were promptly rejected.

In despair, the country thought of the one man who could save Gandhi — Winston Churchill. A non-party conference was held in Delhi with Tej Bahadur Sapru as chairman, and three hundred public men from different parts of India, representing different communities, creeds and interests, sent a cable to Churchill on 21 February saying:

We fear that unless immediately released he [Gandhi] will pass away. We wish to explain to British public opinion that the Mahatma is fasting only to be able to review the situation as a free man and to advise the people accordingly and not on the issue of independence. . . . We firmly believe that if the Mahatma's life is spared a way will be opened to the promotion of peace and goodwill as surely as his death as a British prisoner will intensify public embitterment. . . . Millions of our countrymen feel that the responsibility for saving the Mahatma's life now rests only with the Government.¹¹⁵

The signatories to the cable were, among others, Sapru, Rajaji, Allah Buksh, Abdul Halim Guznavi, Shaukatullah Ansari, B.T. Ranadive, S.P. Mookerjee, B.S. Moonje, H.N. Kunzru, J.R.D. Tata, N.M. Joshi, G.L. Mehta, Humayun Kabir and K.M. Munshi.

Next day, on 22 February, Churchill sent his reply:

The Government of India decided last August that Mr Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress must be detained for reasons which have been fully explained and are well understood. The reasons for that decision have not ceased to exist and His Majesty's Government endorse the determination of the Government of India not to be deflected from their duty towards the peoples of India and of the United Nations by Mr Gandhi's attempt to secure his unconditional release by fasting. . . . There can be no justification for discriminating between Mr Gandhi and other Congress leaders. The responsibility therefore rests entirely with Mr Gandhi himself.¹¹⁶

This was one occasion when Churchill had almost succeeded in driving Gandhi to death. This also reveals that aspect of his character which knew no grace or elegance towards his political foes and did not distinguish between a Gandhi and a Hitler. To his surprise, as to the surprise of all others, Gandhi did not die but survived the ordeal from the 13th to the 21st day of the fast through most critical moments. On 3 March, his epic fast ended. 'Full control of the mind over the body and strong determination to live for which he fought every inch of the ground — this is how Gandhiji could tide over the crisis that threatened his life at one stage of the fast', commented Bidhan Chandra Roy in an interview to the press. It is said that while millions of Indians offered prayers in relief at the end of the fast, 'certain European elements in India did not conceal their disappointment'.

While Gandhi continued to remain a problem to the government, it had the satisfaction of seeing most other Congressmen neutralized in jails. Twelve of the top leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Govind Ballabh Pant, Syed Mahmud, Acharya Kripalani, Shankar Rao Deo, Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Asaf Ali, Acharya Narendra Dev, Hare Krushna Mahtab were kept in an internment camp in the Ahmadnagar Fort which was a 16th century Mughal fortress, converted into a prison because it offered the maximum security. With almost the whole Congress leadership locked up, Jinnah and the League had ample opportunity to strengthen their position under the benign patronage of the government. By May 1943 the League had the satisfaction of seeing all the Muslim-majority provinces under the control of League ministries.

Jinnah had condemned the Quit India movement as a declaration of war by the Congress soon after the leaders were arrested, and had said: 'It is to be deplored all the more that this movement is launched at this critical juncture with the object of forcing their demands at the point of the bayonet, which, if conceded, will mean sacrifice of all other interests, particularly those of Muslims in India.'¹¹⁷ He had appealed to the Muslims to keep themselves completely aloof from the movement and

not to surrender to the threats or intimidations of Congress workers. As the revolution proceeded and he stood by the government, he became more and more assertive in his demands. 'We want the British Government to declare now that Pakistan will be introduced when the war is won.' He congratulated Churchill when the Prime Minister announced in Parliament that the Congress did not represent India and ninety millions of Muslims were fundamentally opposed to the Congress.¹¹⁸ It was the war which stabilized the position of the League on the sound basis of 'Anglo-Muhammedan' co-operation. To the immense satisfaction of the viceroy, Jinnah was seen to have rendered a unique service to the empire when he succeeded in placing League ministries in Muslim majority provinces.

Lord Linlithgow was counting his Indian days after having done his work. On 20 October 1943, when he ended his viceroyalty, there was no sign of any hope for a better prospect. On the other hand, one of the greatest famines in Indian history was ravaging Bengal when people perished in countless numbers. Neither the British nor the Muslim League ministry could escape the discredit of their failure in handling that man-made famine. Added to this internal tragedy, the worried viceroy saw new dangers on the eastern frontiers at the time of his departure. Gandhi hoped that some day Linlithgow would realize how he had been led into a grievous error, but the latter took leave of India without repentance.* It is surprising that, far from the Indian scene, he regretted the partition of India when it came while holding Gandhi and the Congress primarily responsible for that tragedy, forgetting his own role while in power in bolstering up Jinnah to a position of unique eminence and in encouraging his demand for Pakistan overtly and covertly when the Congress was kept out of picture.

When Lord Wavell took over the viceroyalty on 20 October 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose was active across the eastern frontiers, preparing for an armed re-entry into India. After his daring escape from India in January 1941, Bose had arrived in Kabul, and ultimately in Germany, where he planned to organize an army in order to advance to Central Asia in the wake of German advance in Russia, and to enter India through the north-west. But his programme of action in the west did not materialize since the Axis Powers showed no interest in making a declaration about the independence of India.¹¹⁹ From Europe, therefore, he looked to the eastern fronts where the success of Japan was astounding and the retreat of British forces was rapid. Groundwork was already in process under the leadership of an old revolutionary, Rash Behari

*It is said that Linlithgow once, after his viceroyalty, predicted Gandhi's assassination.

Bose, to organize a body called the Indian Independence League and to raise an army of liberation. Such an organization could come into existence because of the sympathy of a substantial Indian population living in south-east Asia and of the Indian soldiers who had been abandoned to their fate by their British officers after defeat. An officer of the British-Indian army, Captain Mohan Singh, who had been taken prisoner by the Japanese and released, joined the movement. The Japanese took advantage of the situation by handing over the Indian prisoners of war to Mohan Singh to strengthen his hand, and in no time, an army of Indians, styled as the Indian National Army or Azad Hind Fauj, came into being.

To Bose in Europe this was a most opportune development. Invited by the League, he finally left from Kiel in a German submarine in February 1943, and taking serious risks during a perilous journey, he at last reached Tokyo in June. There he could persuade the Japanese Government to agree to the principle that India should 'achieve full independence in the true sense of the term'. He felt assured of his freedom of action in organizing his army and leading it to India. In July, in Singapore, he assumed responsibility as the President of the Indian Independence League, and proceeded to organize the Provisional Government of Free India as well as the Indian National Army. Calling upon the latter he said: 'In this final march to freedom you will have to face hunger, privation, forced marches and death. Only when you pass this test will freedom be yours.'¹²⁰ The slogan he gave to the army was '*Dilli Chalo*' — March on to Delhi. From Bangkok, on 2 October 1943, he explained in a broadcast address the nature and purpose of his mission:

I would like to remind you that when Mahatma Gandhi commenced his Non-cooperation programme to the Indian nation at the annual session of the Congress at Nagpur in December, 1920, he said, 'If India had the sword today, she would have drawn the sword.' And proceeding further with his argument, Mahatmaji then said that since armed revolution was out of the question, the only alternative before the country was that of Non-cooperation or Satyagraha. Since then times have changed and it is now possible for the Indian people to draw the sword. We are happy and proud that India's Army of Liberation has already come into existence. . . . The final struggle for liberty will be long and hard and we must go on fighting — till the last Britisher in India is either cast in prison or thrown out of the country.¹²¹

The Provisional Government of Free India was inaugurated on 21 October, the day after Wavell assumed office in India. The new viceroy was to see the march of the INA towards Arakan and their subsequent advance on to Indian soil during the months to come.

Wavell began his regime in an atmosphere of hopelessness. Linlithgow, in his parting advice to his successor, told him that no breakthrough in the Indian crisis was possible while Gandhi lived, and that the British would have to continue in India 'for at least another 30 years'. Several Congress extremists were still at large, though the retiring viceroy had the satisfaction for having arrested recently one of the most dangerous among them, Jayaprakash Narayan, who had a considerable following and great influence. In spite of discouraging words from one who had administered the empire for seven years and a half, Wavell had to bide his time till a new approach became possible.

On 17 February 1944 Wavell addressed a joint session of the Central Legislature to lay stress upon how he would look at India. 'India was a natural unit within which the two great communities must decide how to live together, as communities differing in culture or religion had contrived to do elsewhere,' he declared. But he thought of this possibility only within the Cripps offer. Regretting that the Congress stood aloof in respect of a settlement, he called for its co-operation, while at the same time he announced that he saw no reason to release those responsible for the Quit India rebellion until they withdrew the policy of non-cooperation and obstruction.¹²²

The same day that Wavell announced his policy, Gandhi addressed a letter to him saying:

I am looked upon by the representatives of the British Government as a great, if not the greatest, enemy of the British. . . . I repeat what I said in the correspondence with your predecessor, that the Congress and I am wholly innocent of the charges brought against us. . . . Promises for the future are valueless in the face of the world struggle in which the fortune of all nations and therefore of the whole of humanity is involved. Present performance is the peremptory need of the moment, if the war is to end in world peace. . . . Therefore real war effort must mean satisfaction of India's demand. 'Quit India' only gives vivid expression to that demand and has not the sinister and poisonous meaning attributed to it without warrant by the Government of India.¹²³

By way of a reply to this letter, Wavell sent a copy of his speech at the Central Legislature saying that it contained his point of view.

The authorities did not hesitate to inflict on Gandhi as many pinpricks as possible on political issues. But, surprisingly, they did not think it necessary to give him peace even in strictly personal matters. In granting facilities for the treatment of the dying Kasturba they showed no grace or human feeling for the patient's needs or desires and Gandhi had to watch her last agonies helplessly. On 22 February she breathed her last.

Shattered in health and mind, the Mahatma fell seriously ill within the next two months. By early May the doctors expressed their concern that 'he might die at any moment'. At Gangtok, on 4 May, the viceroy got the news by telegram and realized the urgency of a spot decision. The Government of Bombay had recommended immediate release and the private secretary to viceroy had asked for approval to inform London that Gandhi required release in twenty-four hours. Out of Delhi, Wavell had no opportunity to discuss the matter with his Council, and apprehensive of serious consequences in case Gandhi died, he cabled his consent. On 6 May Gandhi was released unconditionally on medical grounds. 'Personally,' noted the viceroy, 'I could not see that we gained much credit by releasing him at the point of death; and if he was not at the point of death there was no need of such hurry.' He satisfied himself on the report of his advisers resting on the findings of the doctors that 'Gandhi would not be a factor in active politics again'.¹²⁴ It was understood that 'his memory and headpiece may be affected'.

Out of confinement Gandhi recovered quickly to make himself active again. He gave the government to understand that he stood by the Quit India resolution, even though the viceroy hoped that the Congress would abandon the policy of non-cooperation. When Gandhi requested permission to meet the Congress Working Committee and the Viceroy himself Wavell did not agree, saying that no purpose would be served by such a meeting unless he had something more constructive than Quit India to propose.

To the Congressmen who were still free, Gandhi's presence outside at once brought a renewed confidence. The mass awakening in the wake of the revolution had moved the consciousness of the country in radically newer directions. Whether the Congress had acted correctly or gone wrong at places in the course of a leaderless revolution was a point of no significance. That the people had shown great courage, endured suffering and sacrifice, faced death boldly in the struggle was a matter of pride for all. 'The August resolution is still there,' Gandhi told Congressmen at Pune, 'I cannot alter, nor do I wish to alter, a single comma in that resolution. . . . No hair-splitting discussions are called for. One step is enough.'¹²⁵

There were many Congress militants who were still evading arrest when Gandhi became free. Some of them wanted to seek his guidance. The Mahatma advised them to come only at their own risk, and some of them decided to come. Among them were R.R. Diwakar, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Ananda Chaudhury. True to his principles, Gandhi told them that any secrecy in his movements was sin. 'To the extent to which secrecy has crept in,' he said, 'it has hurt our cause. We have not to think in terms of one or two, we have to think in terms of

forty crores. Today they feel lifeless. We cannot revive them by resorting to secret methods. Only by adhering to Truth and Non-violence can we bring back lustre to their lustreless eyes.'¹²⁶ Some of the underground workers explained that had they not gone into hiding, their cause would have suffered. But Gandhi advised them to work openly so that the struggle gathered greater strength.

Many Congress militants accepted his advice. For nearly two years by then, they had been conducting their activities from underground with a network of dedicated patriots at many places. Finally they came out to offer civil resistance openly and to court arrest and imprisonment. Some others, of course, decided not to bow down before the government but to remain at large as long as they could. Among these latter were Aruna Asaf Ali and Achyut Patwardhan who surfaced only early in 1946 when the warrants against them were cancelled.

Gandhi's renewed activities for confrontation with the British when the war presented prospects of success for the Allies annoyed Winston Churchill so greatly that he was at his wit's end as to how to deal with his arch enemy. When the viceroy was pressing hard upon the prime minister for shipment of food to India to save millions of lives in Bengal, and was eagerly awaiting a telegram in that connection, he was surprised to receive instead Churchill's peevish telegram, dated 5 July 1944, asking why Gandhi had not died yet!¹²⁷ No viceroy could have devised an answer to this.

Gandhi's person was the rallying point of all shades of revolutionary groups, even if all of them were not in favour of non-violence. Methods might differ, but for the goal of independence, the mahatma was a symbol of determination. His 'Quit India' message was likewise the rallying-cry for all those who wanted the end of the Raj. Having fought violent battles against the British near Cox's Bazar on Indian soil, in the Chin Hills and the Naga Hills, and having captured Kohima where the tricolour flag was hoisted, and having advanced into the plains of Imphal, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, too, had thought of Gandhi as the supreme messiah of Indian revolution, and the fountain-head of inspiration to all. Addressing an appeal to him over the radio on 6 July 1944, he said:

Mahatmajil! . . . For Indians outside India, you are the creator of the present awakening in our country. The high esteem in which you are held by patriotic Indians outside India and by foreign friends of India's freedom, was increased a hundredfold when you bravely sponsored the 'Quit India' Resolution in August 1942. . . . India's last war of independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India, and in spite of all difficulty and hardship, they are pushing forward slowly

but steadily. . . . Father of our nation! In this holy war for India's liberation we ask for your blessing and good wishes.¹²⁸

The herioc advance of Netaji Bose, of course, came to a halt when the tide of the World War turned. But Gandhi's struggle had no end till the goal was reached. Aware of how his two formidable adversaries were working against India and the Congress, he thought of opening negotiations with them to make them see reason. On 17 July 1944, he wrote to Churchill:

Dear Prime Minister, you are reported to have a desire to crush the simple 'naked fakir' as you are said to have described me. I have been long trying to be a fakir and that naked — a more difficult task. I, therefore, regard the expression as a compliment though unintended. I approach you then as such and ask you to trust and use me for the sake of your people and mine and through them those of the world.¹²⁹

The same day, Gandhi wrote to Jinnah requesting a meeting, saying: 'After my release I have not written to you so far. But today I am prompted to do so. Let us meet when you wish to. Please do not regard me as an enemy of Islam and the Muslims here. I have always been a friend and servant of yours and of the whole world. Do not dismiss me.'¹³⁰

By end of July he assured Wavell of full co-operation in war efforts if the British would make a declaration of immediate Indian independence, and form a national government. But this offer for Congress-Government understanding was rejected by Amery on the ground that these proposals did not even form a starting point for fruitful discussion.

It was impossible to move Churchill's Government for any understanding on the basis of Congress demands. That being so, Gandhi paid greater attention to a negotiation with Jinnah. In the meantime, Rajagopalachari had prepared a 'formula' to bring about a Congress-League understanding on India's future shape. Gandhi was willing to recommend it to the Congress Working Committee for consideration only if Jinnah was prepared to accept it first. According to this formula, the contiguous districts in the North-west and East of India in which the Muslims were in an absolute majority were to be demarcated to constitute Pakistan. And, arrangements should be made by mutual agreement on such vital matters as defence, communications and commerce, etc., to the advantage of both India and Pakistan. The League Working Committee smelled foul in the formula, but gave full authority to Jinnah to negotiate with Gandhi.

So were held the crucial Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944. In all, fourteen interviews took place between the two leaders at Bombay,

beginning on 9 September and ending on 27 September. During their rapid race in words, both carried on a correspondence so that their respective stands on the issue were unambiguously recorded. Jinnah, to start with, rejected the Rajagopalachari formula for its aim of creating a 'maimed, mutilated Pakistan' and urged on Gandhi that the only solution of India's problem was to accept the division of the country as Pakistan and Hindustan. Gandhi argued: 'I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam, it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children.' He challenged the very fundamental of the Lahore Resolution by tracing out the grave anomalies it contained, and saw in it nothing but ruin for the whole of India. To Jinnah, the Muslims and the Hindus were two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. 'We are a nation of a hundred million,' he emphasized, 'and, what is more, we are a nation with our own distinctive culture and civilisation, language and literature, art and architecture, names and nomenclature, sense of value and proportion, legal laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions, aptitudes and ambitions — in short, we have our own distinctive outlook on life and of life. By all canons of international law we are a nation.'

Gandhi suggested that the wishes of the inhabitants of the Muslim majority areas should be ascertained through the votes of the adult population of those areas after India was free from foreign domination. If the vote was in favour of separation, India could be constituted into two sovereign independent states under a treaty of separation, providing for satisfactory arrangements in matters of foreign affairs, defence, communications, etc. The treaty should also contain terms for safeguarding the rights of the minorities in the two states. To Jinnah, these suggestions were like the rejection of the very basis of the Pakistan Resolution, and therefore, unacceptable.¹³¹ He would not be satisfied with anything less than what he had demanded in his Lahore Resolution, and would not wait to create Pakistan till after India's independence, but should have it before the British left.

The Gandhi-Jinnah talks thus yielded no result, but only aggravated the existing Congress-League differences. The viceroy interpreted their thoughts to understand that while Gandhi and the Congress wanted to wrest power from the British first and settle with the Muslims and the princes next, Jinnah feared that once the British had gone, the Hindus would never agree to a division of India. One year thus passed since Wavell assumed office, with the Indian situation remaining as gloomy as before. The Churchill Cabinet of course stood firm on its principle that there should be no move for negotiation as long as the Quit India

demand stood and the Congress did not change its policy towards the war. But the war was coming to an end anyway, in no distant future. Countless political prisoners would have to be released soon thereafter, and they would find the country in a far worse condition than when they went to prison. The shadow of the great famine still lingered in the shape of acute food shortage. Demobilization of war recruits and the closing down of the war factories as well as of war-time clerical establishments would lead to sudden unemployment. With the Congress leaders out of gaol and on the war-path, the prevailing conditions at the end of the war would invariably make India a fertile field for agitation. A worried Wavell came to the conclusion that a fresh move on behalf of the British was necessary, much before the end of the war.

Afraid of the coming circumstances, he at length took courage to advise the Prime Minister to understand the situation. In a long letter, also sharply worded, dated 24 October 1944, he wrote to Churchill:

I have not always found you an easy master to serve. But I think you realise that I have always served loyally . . . I will begin by saying that my primary reason for writing is that I feel very strongly that the future of India is the problem on which the British Commonwealth and the British reputation will stand or fall in the post-war period . . . Our prestige and prospects in Burma, Malaya, China and the Far East generally are entirely subject to what happens in India. If we can secure India as a friendly partner in the British Commonwealth our predominant influence in these countries will, I think, be assured; with a lost and hostile India, we are likely to be reduced in the East to the position of commercial bag-men

The present Government of India cannot continue indefinitely, or even for long. Though ultimate responsibility still rests with His Majesty's Government, His Majesty's Government has no longer the power to take effective action. We shall drift increasingly into situations — financial, economic or political — for which India herself will be responsible but for which His Majesty's Government will get the discredit. . . .

If our aim is to retain India as a willing member of the British Commonwealth, we must make some imaginative and constructive move without delay. We have every reason to mistrust and dislike Gandhi and Jinnah, and their followers. But the Congress and the League are the dominant parties in Hindu and Muslim India, and will remain so. . . . Even if Gandhi and Jinnah disappeared tomorrow I can see no prospect of our having more reasonable people to deal with. We have had to negotiate with similar rebels before, e.g., De Valera and Zaghlul.¹³²

Wavell proposed that a fresh start should be initiated as early as possible. Since India could not be any longer held down by force, he felt the necessity of installing a provisional government, and of devising means to reach a constitutional settlement. Unless steps were taken

to show a change of attitude in a friendly direction to convince the educated Indian that the British were sincere in their intentions, the deep-rooted feeling of suspicion, mistrust and enmity might result in total chaos.

The viceroy informed the prime minister that the view that something must be done before long was the considered opinion of the commander-in-chief, of all the eleven provincial governors, and of all the senior members of the Indian Civil Service with whom he had consulted. He appealed to Churchill not to ignore the weight of the entire British official opinion in this regard.

Wavell's words, however, fell on Churchill's closed ears. He showed no sign of having been moved by the viceroy's logic and the Secretary of State informed Delhi by the end of December 1944 that the War Cabinet would make no move about India until the viceroy came home and convinced them of the wisdom of such a move. 'I have undoubtedly disappointed the hopes of political India which were raised by Gandhi's release,' noted Wavell on the last day of 1944 while looking at the new year 1945 with some amount of hope.

5. End of the War: The Twilight of the Empire

With victory in the war in sight, the year 1945 brought unprecedented hopes of happiness to the British mind. Churchill with his V sign was at the zenith of his glory and greatness. For his government, the immediate concern was to bring about the total defeat of Germany and Japan. Other problems, including India, could wait. The viceroy, therefore, was not getting a call to visit London even though he had been eagerly waiting for it for months.

But India would not wait. Congressmen who were outside or those who had been released for one reason or other could not remain passive. A fresh upheaval was openly discussed. A demoralized administration, groaning under failure on every front, and unable either to supply food or to maintain law and order, could only think of another wave of repressive measures to overcome agitation. In January 1945, the Bihar Government, in order to stall open preparation for another Congress movement, interned Bihar's ex-Premier Srikrishna Sinha, ex-Finance Minister Anugraha Narain Sinha, Professor Abdul Bari and several other leaders. In the United Provinces, Purushottamdas Tandon, the Speaker of the Assembly, and in Orissa, the veteran Congress leader, Gopabandhu Chowdhury, were rearrested. Elsewhere, youthful Congress volunteers were taken to jail for speaking freely about the prevailing situation or for criticizing the government for nepotism and non-action. Many were tortured brutally by the police for renewal of Congress activities.

'What are government protestations about Indian independence if they will not tolerate the movement I have sketched except on conditions impossible of acceptance?' demanded Gandhi of the government in a press statement on 17 February:

Are they not satisfied with the extraordinary power they possess? Must they keep without trial the best known as well as the least known Indians in their custody, lest the latter should preach independence from one end of the country to the other and non-violent acts in pursuit thereof? Must they rearrest released persons the moment they speak and act as free men, if their speech or act does not please the authority? . . . Is it not time this practice of torture and ill-treatment of people held in captivity is firmly discountenanced and put an end to by the powers that be?¹³³

Waiting for Churchill's summon, Wavell was spending pointless days, trying to raise hopes about big changes, but enjoying the squabbles between the Congress and League leaders. Bhulabhai Desai, the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, was negotiating with Liaquat Ali Khan of the Muslim League about a formula for a coalition government at the Centre. It came to nothing since Jinnah did not like such negotiations at any level lower than his own. Also with deadlock between the government and the Congress, no value could also be attached to any constitutional discussion. For Jinnah looked for support only from the British to attain his goal, having no faith in the Congress as regards Pakistan. Moreover, he was feeling diffident to bargain with the Congress for his own weakness was apparent in the Muslim majority provinces in which he had temporarily succeeded in placing League ministries only to see them disgraced and defeated in course of time. In March, the League Ministry fell in the North-West Frontier Province and Khan Sahib was invited to form a Congress Government, the first Congress Ministry to take office after the Congress Ministries had resigned in 1939. Similarly, the League Ministry of Khwaja Nazimuddin was defeated in Bengal where the governor's rule was imposed. In Assam, too, Muhammad Saadullah was obliged to form coalition with the Congress under Gopinath Bardolai. The League Ministry was tottering in Sind, and in the Punjab, the Unionist Ministry was consolidating its own power. For Jinnah, thus, all his hopes rested in the hands of a victorious Churchill. Any compromising attitude towards the Congress when his own citadels of power proved houses of cards was considered by him unwise.

Churchill was however in no hurry about India or the Congress or Jinnah. When, therefore, Amery cabled to Wavell to postpone his visit to London till June 1945, an indignant viceroy cabled back on 15 March a note of protest: 'The discourtesy of the thing annoys me. No apology, no explanation, just a contemptuous wave of the hand — "Tell India to wait

till it's more convenient".¹³⁴ His protest worked. Summoned to London at once, he left Delhi on 20 March, accompanied by V.P. Menon, and Evan Jenkins. It was going to be a prolonged stay at home, yet another indication that Britain was in no hurry about India. From 23 March to 4 June, the viceroy had to hang on before Amery and others could come up with some new proposals.

Meanwhile, in those summer days of 1945, the world saw crowded dramatic events affecting the destiny of mankind in one way or another. It seemed as if the old world was going to its grave and a new world order was emerging. At San Francisco that summer, on 25 April, was convened a conference to debate upon the future peace, resulting in the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations on 26 June. On the eve of this great conference, Mahatma Gandhi advised the world leaders who were gathering there to decide about the world-to-be after the end of the war:

I very much fear [he said in a statement] that behind the structure of world security sought to be raised lurk mistrust and fear which breed war. Therefore as a lifelong believer in peace as against war, it seems well for me to record my convictions in the matter. . . . Exploitation and domination of one nation over another can have no place in a world striving to put an end to all wars. . . . An indispensable preliminary to peace is the complete freedom of India from all foreign control, not merely because it is a classic example of imperialist domination but specially because it is a big, ancient and cultured country which has fought for its freedom since 1920 deliberately with Truth and Non-violence as its only weapon.¹³⁵

The Government of India nominated A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar, Firoz Khan Noon and V.T. Krishnamachari as the Indian representatives to the San Francisco Conference. This was resented in the Congress circles and Gandhi regarded such representation as no representation at all.

The war was coming to an end. On 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered. In the east, Japan's surrender would follow in a matter of weeks. But in that hour of joy, there was no trace of doubt in the British mind that their victory over Nazism and fascism was no guarantee of their triumph over Indian nationalism. The case was rather the reverse. The end of the war they knew was sure to lead to an Indian national rising on an unprecedented scale which it would be impossible for the British to fight. The Congress had hardly made a distinction between fascism and imperialism, and their struggle against the latter would seldom wait once the former had met its well deserved death.

It was with these apprehensions in mind that Churchill and Amery discussed Indian problem with the viceroy through April and May 1945.

The members of the British Cabinet Committee on India, including Attlee, Amery, Cripps and Butler, discussed with Wavell problems and personalities, risks and dangers in thinking of any new move. There was no chance of the Congress withdrawing the Quit India resolution, the viceroy told the Committee. Any demand for this from the British side would only revive it. 'You must have mercy on us', Churchill requested Wavell, indicating thereby postponement of consideration of the Indian problem till the British general elections were over. But when the viceroy explained how delay would invite danger, the Prime Minister opened his mind to suggest that he favoured the partition of India into Hindustan, Pakistan, and Princestan. 'He talked as if I was proposing to "Quit India", change the constitution, and hand over India right away,' felt Wavell.¹³⁶

For more than two months the viceroy had been trying to obtain something from his masters to please India. At long last, but in a most miserly way, Churchill approved some of the proposals to be announced on Wavell's return. The latter felt that 'with the Election looming up he [Churchill] could not possibly risk India becoming a party issue, and decided to give way with good grace.'¹³⁷

The viceroy returned to Delhi on 4 June. On 14 June he announced in a broadcast his political proposals for India's advance towards full self-government and that he proposed to invite the Indian leaders to Simla to seek their counsel in regard to the formation of a new Executive Council which should be more representative of Indian political opinion and would include 'an equal number of Caste Hindus and Muslims'. He further pointed out that, except for the viceroy and the commander-in-chief, this Council would be an entirely Indian one with, for the first time, Home, Finance, and Foreign Affairs in Indian hands. The new Council would also explore the means by which agreement could be reached for a new, permanent constitution. The same day, Amery announced in Parliament that the viceroy had been empowered to advance proposals for the formation of an interim government in India.

The announcement was coupled with an order for the immediate release of the members of the Congress Working Committee. On 15 June, therefore, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders were released from prison. The Simla Conference was to meet within the next ten days, on 25 June to begin with.

When the viceroy announced the release of the Congress Working Committee, tactfully enough he left the issue of the release of thousands of other Congressmen to the decision of the new Central Government and of the provincial governments. 'I am coming out of jail after 1,041 days,' said a surprised Nehru the day he was released,

My first thoughts on coming out of prison are with those who are still rotting in prison. . . . Against this grim background of suffering and humiliation it is not a matter for any rejoicing that eight members of the Congress Working Committee have come strutting out of prison. It is a matter for shame and sorrow that so many of our comrades are still behind prison walls. Their sufferings, unlike mine, have not hit the headlines. The world tends to forget them. That is why I want to pay homage to those unknown Congress soldiers, who have borne the brunt of the struggle.¹³⁸

The great events and the revolutionary changes that were taking place all over the world proved a source of great inspiration to Nehru to fight for India's freedom with greater vigour. During the three previous years the British administration had disgraced itself by its gruesome actions, he thought. The terrible and ghastly tragedy of the Bengal famine was a final judgment on British rule in India. Nehru did not view with favour the Wavell Plan, but waited to see what was to happen at Simla.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, on his release, found the Wavell proposal yet another trap to harm the Congress. 'Parity between caste Hindus and Muslims can have no place at the conference,' he declared on 17 June. 'I hope that no nationalist will be a party to any arrangement which has as its basis a religious division. I express these sentiments not only on my own behalf but all those Congressmen who are with Gandhiji at the moment.'¹³⁹

The Congress Working Committee, under President Azad, met at Bombay on 21 and 22 June to discuss the Wavell proposal. It was meeting after three years of detention. To escape the political stagnation, it decided that the Congress as an organization should participate in the Simla Conference, and conveyed its decision to the viceroy accepting his invitation. At the same time it made it known to the Congress invitees to Simla that the principle of communal parity was not acceptable, except in a limited and temporary sense. It should not mean also that all the Muslim members of the National Government were to be nominated by the Muslim League. The Committee was of opinion that the names to that body might be proposed for Hindus, Muslims and Scheduled Castes, etc., by all the groups in the Conference to be adopted by the Conference as a whole.

Armed with these decisions, the Congress leaders proceeded to Simla. Meeting the viceroy a day before the Conference opened, and that was their first meeting, Gandhi pointed out that all the political prisoners, and not merely the Congress Working Committee, should have been released before any fresh move to end the crisis, and that the term 'caste Hindus' should not have been used. Wavell felt satisfied that the Mahatma, with his reservations and objections, nevertheless gave 'his blessings to the proposals'. That day Jinnah also met the viceroy to say

that the Muslim League alone should nominate all the Muslim members to the proposed Executive Council. The viceroy challenged this contention, but Jinnah remained unmoved. It became apparent to Wavell that the Congress and the League were at diametrically opposite poles on the issue of who really represented the Indian Muslims.

Gandhi decided not to attend the Conference in person since, as he told the viceroy, he 'represented nobody except himself'. To Jinnah, 'it was another trick of Gandhi's, he pretended not to belong to the Congress when it suited his book, but when necessary appeared as the Dictator of Congress which everyone knew he was.'¹⁴⁰

The abortive Simla Conference met on 25 June and ended on 14 July after its fifth and the last session. That day the disappointed viceroy announced the failure of the conference because the Muslim League claimed the right to nominate all the Muslim members to the Executive Council.

It was a fruitless exercise involving so many prominent leaders for three weeks. Wavell could have possibly been more assertive to counter-act Jinnah, but if he did not assert, it could be due to his fear of Churchill who was still the prime minister and who was most hopeful of continuing as prime minister of post-war Britain. It can be presumed that had the Simla Conference gone in favour of the Congress with the prospects of a Congress-dominated Interim Government unchecked by the League, the Churchill government would have never agreed to it. For reasons known to him alone, Wavell was not sorry at the failure and took the responsibility for it on himself. At the same time he derived satisfaction for the fact that at the end of a revolutionary epoch he was able to collect the topmost men of India together to agree to differ in their search for settlement. It was his good luck that he could create a good impression in the minds of some of the Congress leaders that the days of British obstinacy were perhaps over. Maulana Azad was himself much struck 'by Wavell's frankness and sincerity and his obviously genuine desire to open a new chapter in the relations between Congress and the Government'.

The viceroy's failure at Simla was soon followed by one of the most significant incidents in Indo-British relations at that crossroads of time — the fall of Churchill from power in Great Britain. The results of the British general election showed a landslide victory for the Labour Party, betraying the robust hope of the Conservative leader that he would bring his party to power in the full blaze of his victory over Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. His defeat surprised many. King George VI felt upset to see the rejection of his great War Prime Minister by the British electorate and thought of his subjects as being 'very ungrateful'.¹⁴¹ But the verdict of the people having come, the King summoned Clement

Richard Attlee on 26 July 1945 to ask him to form the next government. In Congress circles the change in Britain was viewed as a hopeful sign, while the League quarters viewed it with considerable despondency. 'Obviously,' commented Nehru, 'the tremendous victory of the Labour Party in Britain in the general elections is an event of outstanding importance both in the domestic affairs of Britain and in international affairs.'¹⁴²

A new issue meanwhile suddenly confronted the Indian government and roused strong feelings in nationalist circles all over the country. It was the fate of members of the Indian National Army at the end of the war. With the advance of the Allied forces into the lands occupied by the Japanese, and finally when the atom bomb sealed the fate of Japan, thousands of the INA men fell into British hands and now awaited punishment. About 70,000 men of the Indian Army had been taken by the Japanese as prisoners of war. Of these, more than 20,000 had joined the INA to fight against the British to liberate India. Many of them now faced trial for having waged war against the king.

The news of the heroic exploits of the INA had thrilled the imagination of all sections of the Indian people. The INA had not only demonstrated patriotic courage, but had also set an example of national unity, far above communal prejudices. Their future caused deep anxiety, and public opinion soon got mobilized to express the nation's support for them.

I demand [said Nehru on 19 August], that the Government of India clarify the position of the prisoners of the Indian National Army, who fought against the British along with the Japanese. . . . I affirm that they were misguided, but whatever they did was done by them out of patriotic motive. Most of them have, however, been arrested and are reported to be in Indian jails. What treatment the Government of India will mete out to them is a matter of great concern for us.¹⁴³

Reports trickled out that some of the INA officers and soldiers had been executed and others were being subjected to inhuman treatment in unidentified prisons and forts, and most of the captives were being held under the shadow of death. 'The punishment inflicted on them will, in effect,' warned Nehru, 'be a punishment for the whole of India, and a deep wound will remain in millions of hearts. In this matter, fortunately, there is no communal question, for these officers and men are Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.'¹⁴⁴

The INA trial apart, the general mood of the people presented a defiance of the administration and contempt for the government. There were endless grievances to agitate about. The Congress had been told repeatedly by the war-time government that nothing should be or could

be done as long as the war continued. Now that the war had ended, it saw no reason for patience. It was to its own advantage that the Labour Government moved swiftly in its attempts to pacify India.

On 18 August, four days after the surrender of Japan, the new Secretary of State, Pethick-Lawrence, instructed the viceroy to take the initiative at once and seriously by paying prompt attention to the release of political prisoners, by lifting the ban on the Congress organizations, and working out a programme for elections. The viceroy who knew nothing of his boss except that he had 'fixed and old-fashioned ideas derived mainly from Congress contacts' found in his order the 'first real sign of life'. He immediately announced his intention of holding general elections and proceeded to London for further instructions.

The Congress policy at that moment was unequivocal. They would have nothing to do with the Cripps proposals of 1942 or the Wavell proposals of 1945, those being the rotten gifts of the Churchill Cabinet. From a purely Labour Government they now expected really progressive measures in accordance with the Congress ideologies to which the British socialists had lent support in their own desire to see a democratically and socially progressive political future of India. The Congress expected the Labour Party to believe that it stood for nationalism and democracy, and was opposed to the communal and feudal outlook. For years by then it had been demanding a permanent constitution to be framed by an Indian constituent assembly. The Congress hoped that the Labour Party would make a fresh declaration of its definite policies now that it was in power in order to prove to the world that the doctrines it had preached and upheld for long were really meant. The fall of Churchill and Amery from power was interpreted in Congress quarters as symbolic of the 'downfall of India's oppressors' and the Congress president and his colleagues had had the pleasure to send messages of congratulation to Premier Attlee on his grand victory. They waited to see how the Labour Government would rise to the occasion to satisfy Indian aspirations. 'With sincerity, goodwill and co-operation I am confident that much can be accomplished,' announced Pethick-Lawrence to the Indian press in London.¹⁴⁵

From late August to mid-September 1945, the viceroy stayed in London to negotiate policies with the new governments. The problem for the latter was not the Congress, but Jinnah. According to Wavell, any constituent assembly would certainly be boycotted by the Muslim League if Pakistan was not conceded; if it was conceded, the Congress was sure to oppose. According to Attlee, the failure to do anything would lead to a fresh outbreak of Congress agitation. It was ultimately agreed that, after the elections were held, the representatives of the newly elected provincial legislative assemblies would be called upon to

ascertain the possibilities of a constitution-making body. The viceroy was authorized to form an Executive Council with the support of the main Indian parties soon after the election results were known. While these decisions were supposed to be workable, another thorny problem demanded scrutiny — how to bring representation of the Indian States into the constitution-making body, keeping the British obligations to the princes in view. The Labour Government was indeed faced with insurmountable problems, but there was no escape from taking steps one way or another.

Returning to India on 16 September with fresh mandates, the viceroy announced the holding of the elections and his plans for summoning the constitution-making body. The All-India Congress Committee met at Bombay soon thereafter to analyse the latest prospects. Considerable displeasure was expressed at the fact that no radical approach was being made by the Attlee government, even at that late hour. Even though the Labour Party knew that nothing short of independence was acceptable to Congress, no mention was made of it. Similarly, though the government announced about the holding of elections for the central and provincial assemblies, no steps were being taken to release Congressmen who were still in prison. The old restrictions on their free movement still continued, and several organizations like the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the kisan organization were still under ban. Added to these, no steps were visualized to revise the electoral rolls which were defective and out of date. The AICC therefore considered the latest British proposals as 'vague, inadequate and unsatisfactory', but yet passed a resolution on 22 September saying: 'In spite of these many handicaps the AICC decided to contest the elections if for nothing else than to demonstrate the revolutionary will of the people of India and to utilise the elections for furthering the struggle for the independence of India.'¹⁴⁶ A central election committee consisting of Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Govind Ballabh Pant, Asaf Ali, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Sankar Rao Deo was constituted to organize the elections.

The Congress thus entered into yet another crucial election with a manifesto that declared:

The Congress has stood for equal rights and opportunities for every citizen of India, man or woman. It has stood for the unity of all communities and religious groups and for tolerance and goodwill between them. . . . It has stood for the freedom of each group and territorial area within the nation to develop its own life and culture within the larger framework. It has stood for the rights of all those who suffer from social tyranny and injustice and for the removal from them of all barriers of inequality.¹⁴⁷

During the winter of 1945 and in early months of 1946, India was in the grip of election fever. True to the Quit India spirit, the Congress acted militantly to mobilize mass opinion for Indian independence. This worried the government greatly, particularly when the provincial administration was in a demoralized state, and the morale of the army and the police remained low. The viceroy himself came to believe that the words of Nehru, Patel, Pant, Asaf Ali and others during their election campaign were indicative of yet another uprising at the end of the elections. 'A revolution is inevitable,' declared Nehru. According to Patel 'sure as day follows night there would be another struggle'. 'Remember, "Quit India" is our mantra. If the British Government does not withdraw gracefully, we will compel it to do so,' preached Pant.

A disturbed Wavell decided to straighten out the matter with Nehru. On 3 November they met for a frank exchange of views, when the viceroy drew his attention to the utterances of the Congress leaders which were clear incitement to violence. Nehru deplored violence, but wanted to know how violence could be avoided if legitimate aims could not be attained otherwise. He rejected the viceroy's suggestion for a compromise with the League saying that the Congress could make no terms whatsoever with the Muslim League since it was a reactionary body, Hitlerian in its leadership and policy, and tried to bully everyone.¹⁴⁸ 'I have no doubt,' Wavell reported home, 'that he is bent on serious trouble and that it will be very difficult indeed to divert him from his purpose except by repressive action.'¹⁴⁹

The Congress got a new weapon in election campaign to arouse deep excitement and emotion against the British when the first trials of the INA officers began in November 1945, and that too in the historic Red Fort of Delhi, because of pressure from the Army. Patriotic fervour in their support was roused by Congressmen all over the country. Nehru not only took up the responsibility of defending them, but even thought of setting up Shah Nawaz, P.K. Sehgal and G.S. Dhillon, the famous trio of the INA trial, as Congress candidates in the elections. Going a step further, he suggested to Patel: 'There is at present a widespread and favourable feeling in the army towards the Congress. Large numbers of these people are going to be demobilised soon and I feel it would be right for them to be given a place in the Congress and in the legislatures on our behalf.'¹⁵⁰ The British apprehended in such thoughts the possible Congress attempt to spread disaffection in the Indian army.

While Congressmen were generally sceptical about British intentions, the Labour Government tried its best to keep India hopeful about its future. In the first week of January 1946 it sent out a Parliamentary Delegation of ten members under the leadership of Robert Richards to assess the Indian political situation. The delegation spent a month in

India and met the leaders of different parties and was pleased to report to Parliament on return that India was fit for independence'. At the same time, some of its members felt that it would be most difficult to move Jinnah from his stand on Pakistan.

The Parliamentary Delegation, with the best of its intentions, neither served any constructive purpose nor infused any hope in the Congress mind. On 19 February 1946, in the House of Commons Prime Minister Attlee therefore announced his next major step to contain Congress revolutionary trends:

In view of the paramount importance, not only to India and the British Commonwealth but to the peace of the world, of a successful outcome of discussions with the leaders of Indian opinion on problems arising out of the early realisation by India of self-government, the British Government has decided to send out to India a special mission of Cabinet Ministers to act in association with the Viceroy in this matter.¹⁵¹

Famous as the Cabinet Mission, it was to consist of Pethick-Lawrence, the Secretary of State, Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade, and A.V. Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty.

The situation in India was in the meantime turning grave. The Congress unrest was affecting in one way or another the hitherto loyal organizations in the imperial service. The trial of the INA had moved the people so deeply that any punishment to its officers would have led to an immediate flare up, with repercussions on the army itself. Anticipating the inevitable, the commander-in-chief, in January 1946, remitted the sentences of transportation for life passed on Shah Nawaz, Sehgal and Dhillon by the court-martial. Nehru welcomed the decision saying, 'I trust that this policy will be pursued in the cases of other INA officers and men also. They should be released. . . . The people of India were united as never before and, therefore, it is their triumph also.'¹⁵² In course of countrywide demonstrations during this trial there were 37 deaths in Calcutta alone because of clashes with the police.

The INA trial *vis-à-vis* the popular reaction to it was not the only issue to disturb the Army authorities. They suspected the Congress hand in other spheres also. On 18 February 1946, the ratings of the Royal Indian Navy on *HMIS Talwar* in Bombay went on strike in protest against low pay. In no time they were joined by about 20,000 ratings from the shore establishments. British troops were called in to suppress the mutiny when Indian soldiers refused to fire on the rebel ratings. On 23 February the ratings surrendered on the advice of the Congress leaders, but with a declaration that 'We surrender to India and not to Britain.' During the course of that brief mutiny and on the following days Bombay saw hartals and agitation by people who sympathized with the navy men.

More than two hundred persons were killed in army action to quell the disturbances. A suspicious General Auchinleck, in his broadcast on 25 February, announced: 'In my position as Commander-in-Chief I have nothing whatever to do with politics, and I will not countenance political intrigue in the armed forces in India.' Next day, in a strongly worded rejoinder to the general, Nehru declared:

Our armed forces have every right to revolt against the foreign ruler in order to achieve the freedom of our country. The Commander-in-Chief in his broadcast said that he would not countenance any political intrigue in the armed forces and that discipline was the one thing most essential. I do agree with what he has said. But that army should be a free army of a free country. . . . Our boys cannot forget politics and work as mere mercenary automatons of the foreign government. Our army in my opinion should be fully conscious politically because, besides being soldiers, they have to be citizens and must know that as citizens of the country they have to discharge certain responsibilities to their people.¹⁵³

The fate of the rebel ratings like the fate of the INA men became a concern of the Congress when drastic military punishment awaited them. Both Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel took up their cause and negotiated with the government to abandon the policy of harsh and vindictive treatment towards the RIN men, and the commander-in-chief was obliged to give an assurance that there would be no victimization.

The RIN mutiny carried a grave though timely lesson to the British that they were fast losing their control over the various armed forces responsible for the empire's stability. 'Brothers! We are not fighting to fill our stomachs with better food and for a softer life. We are fighting for the country's freedom' — that was how the armed ratings addressed the Indian soldiers who were commanded by their British officers to shoot at them. And the Indian soldiers did not open fire, disobeying the orders of their superiors.

Also, there were symptoms of restlessness in the Royal Indian Air Force and other services of the Indian army. Referring to the strike of the Army Signalmen at Jubbulpore at the end of February, Nehru commented that such incidents were symbolic of the people's urge for freedom, whether citizens or army men. It became apparent to the viceroy and the army generals that the Congress INA campaign which swept the whole country had had an unsettling effect on the Armed Forces in general which became receptive to Congress doctrines. It was also suspected that most Indian officers in the army were nationalists with leanings towards the Congress ideologies. Side by side, the

'contaminating' effect of patriotic feeling on individual service men through their families and friends was also becoming more and more perceptible.

In March 1946, the Congress was in a triumphant mood when the election results assured them power in all the provinces, except Bengal, Sind and the Punjab. In the North-West Frontier Province where the elections were fought by the League on the slogan of Pakistan, also won an astounding victory. In Assam, which Jinnah claimed for Pakistan, the Congress won an absolute majority. In the Punjab, the Muslim League won 75 seats in a house of 175, thus making possible a coalition ministry of the Congress, the Akalis and the Unionists. It was only in Bengal and Sind that the Muslim League was in a position to form ministries. With the verdict of the people in favour of the Congress which won the election on the issue of immediate independence, the path was open for the High Command to dictate terms to the British. 'If the British Cabinet Mission fails to solve the pressing and urgent problems which are clamouring for solution,' declared Nehru on 2 March 1946, 'a political earthquake of devastating intensity will sweep the entire country. . . . We are sitting on the edge of a volcano which may erupt at any moment. . . . The truth is that people, who are tired and fed up, want to end foreign domination immediately. We will talk to the Cabinet Mission as a free people of one country would talk to the free people of another country.'¹⁵⁴

The Congress worked out its guidelines for negotiations with the Cabinet Mission. The basis of the conversation should be, it was decided, the British recognition of Indian independence, to be followed by discussions on the steps to be taken to implement it. The issue of Dominion Status was irrelevant. The future relation between Britain and India would be decided later. The constitution of free India would be framed by an Indian constituent assembly. The British Parliament would only pass an act of abdication. The newly elected provincial assemblies should form the electoral colleges for the constituent assembly. The constituent assembly would prepare a single constitution for whole of India. The question of Pakistan could be decided by consent of the parties or ultimately by plebiscite of all the inhabitants of an area on a precise and defined issue. Subjects like defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication should be treated as central and common subjects even if some kind of separation was to be envisaged under agreed arrangements. The States were to be admitted to the constituent assembly on specified conditions to be decided in due course. And, finally, the new central government of India should inherit the power and authority of the existing Government of India or the Crown Representative in regard to the States.

The Congress welcomed Attlee's statement on the eve of the Cabinet Mission's departure that 'Is it any wonder that today India claims — as a nation of 400 million people that has twice sent her sons to die for freedom — that she should herself have freedom to decide.' The vice-roy, however, was sceptical concerning the Mission's chances of succeeding in reconciling the Labour Party's intensions and Congress expectations in view of the determination of the League to claim Pakistan. He also doubted whether the three wise men — 'the Magi' — had 'any definite plan in their heads'.

On 24 March, the Cabinet Mission reached India. Immediately thereafter began one of the most difficult and delicate exercises ever to bring the Indian deadlock to an approximation of a settlement. For the first three weeks the British Ministers carried on exploratory discussions with representative Indian leaders of all recognized groups and parties. No settlement, however, appeared anywhere near possibility since the Congress would not accept anything but a united independent India whereas the Muslim League would not give up its demand for Pakistan. Both Gandhi and Jinnah stood solid on their grounds together with their party high commands, while the representatives of the Sikhs, Scheduled Castes, Hindu Mahasabha, Liberals and others, presented their respective viewpoints. After a brief respite, the Mission invited the Congress and the League leaders to Simla to place before them a basis of negotiation. Accepting the invitation, Azad, Nehru, Patel and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan from the Congress side and Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Nawab Ismail and Abdur Rab Nishtar from the League attended the so-called second Simla Conference from 5 to 12 May. The Cabinet Mission thereafter arrived at its own conclusion and drafted its famous plan dated 16 May 1946 as the basis for settlement.

The ministers explained how they examined the question of a separate and fully independent sovereign state of Pakistan consisting of the six provinces as demanded by the League, but felt staggered at the size of the non-Muslim minority population in that proposed Pakistan. In view of this they felt that the setting up of an independent Pakistan on a religious basis would not solve the communal minority problem. 'Nor can we see any justification for including within a sovereign Pakistan those districts of the Punjab and of Bengal and Assam in which the population is predominantly non-Muslim,' they said. 'Every argument that can be used in favour of Pakistan can equally, in our view, be used in favour of the exclusion of the non-Muslim areas from Pakistan.'

A smaller sovereign Pakistan confined to the Muslim-majority areas thus appeared to the Mission as the only alternative for the basis of a compromise with the Congress. But that called for a radical partition of the Punjab and Bengal, which appeared dangerous. Moreover, a smaller

Pakistan without eastern Punjab, without the whole of Assam except the district of Sylhet, and without a large part of western Bengal including Calcutta appeared impracticable. 'We have therefore been forced to the conclusion', said the Cabinet Mission, 'that neither a larger nor a smaller sovereign state of Pakistan would provide an acceptable solution for the communal problem.' They also pointed out how the two halves of the proposed Pakistan would remain geographically separated by some seven hundred miles of Indian territory.

The Mission thus upheld the unity of India and recommended that there should be a Union of India embracing both British India and the Indian States. The Union Centre should deal with Foreign Affairs, Defence, and Communications. All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residuary powers should vest in the provinces. These autonomous provinces should be formed into three groups, of which two would consist of Muslim-majority provinces and one of Hindu-majority provinces. These groups would draft their own regional constitutions. The constitutions of the Union and of the groups should contain a provision whereby any province could, by a majority vote of its Legislative Assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.

The Mission finally recommended that a constitution-making body should be brought into being forthwith to frame a new constitution, and that while this would proceed, an interim government having the support of the major political parties should be set up at once.

Great debates followed the Mission's proposals, and continued endlessly for several weeks. Opinions continued to differ while different parties interpreted the words and the spirit of the proposals in the light of their respective interests. To the Congress leadership the only redeeming feature in the plan was its rejection of India's partition. But, on the other hand, it was inconceivable that a great would-be republic such as India could be governed by a weak and powerless central government. Still more fantastic were the provisions for the grouping of the provinces, and the power given to any province in any group to decide its future after ten years through a majority of its legislators. In other words, under a helpless Union Government, every province would be free to break away from the Union after a decade of communal strife.

Fully aware of all the defects which the Cabinet Mission Plan presented, the Congress decided to accept it only on its conviction that the Constituent Assembly, representing the voice of a sovereign people, should have absolute freedom to decide the future of India, and as such, should not be bound by any commitments to the Cabinet Mission Plan. The Mission left India on 29 June with the depressing feeling that no

solution was in sight since the Congress and the League were still in wide divergence regarding the workable aspects of the plan. The matter ultimately came to a crisis soon after the Mission's departure. On 9 July 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as President of the Congress, and the next day he gave his final say on the Cabinet Mission's proposals *vis-à-vis* the Congress acceptance of it. Describing the nature of the Congress commitment to the plan, he explained:

It is true that in going into the constituent assembly we have inevitably to agree to a certain procedure in advance, that is, the election of the candidates to the constituent assembly. What we do there, we are entirely and absolutely free to determine. We have not committed ourselves on any single matter to anybody. . . . The only limitation on the party's action would be its anxiety to carry the work of the constituent assembly to a successful conclusion. It does not make the slightest difference what the Cabinet Mission thinks or does in the matter.¹⁵⁵

Regarding the grouping of the provinces, Nehru expressed doubt that there would be any grouping at all. The Hindu-majority provinces in Group A would not agree to it. The North-West Frontier Province, though a Muslim-majority province and therefore shown in Group B, would decide against the grouping under its Congress Government, which would be the end of Group B. Assam, too, would decide against grouping with Bengal. Thus, according to Nehru, the Cabinet Mission's 'grouping business, approached from any point of view, does not get on at all'. 'But for the Muslim League, the entire country is opposed to the grouping of provinces. The Muslim League thus stands by itself isolated on this question.'¹⁵⁶

It was Nehru's clear perception of the ulterior motives of the Cabinet Mission's Plan — keeping India weak and tied to British dictates in matters concerning Muslim minority problem and denying real sovereign status to the country — and his forthright exposure of these which destroyed the long-term strategy of the Cabinet Plan and saved India from later disasters. Had the plan been accepted in its entirety, Indian independence would have itself remained a long-term issue, with chances of indefinite civil war becoming a sombre reality.

The Muslim League, with great reluctance and after obtaining plenty of clarifications finally agreed to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan as 'this represented the utmost limit to which the British Government would go'. Jinnah explained to the League Council while recommending acceptance that nothing better could be obtained than what had been given. He was hopeful of utilizing the groupings of the Muslim-majority provinces as the springboard for his future Pakistan since the Plan gave power to provinces to frame their future constitution. The Cabinet Plan

had, in fact, appeared to him as the British guarantee to his prospective separation. And, of course, till Pakistan was born out of that arrangement, Jinnah felt certain of British presence under some treaty arrangements or otherwise to preside over the destiny of the sub-continent. Notwithstanding his doubts concerning Congress sincerity in working out the plan, he was optimistic about British support and believed that the Congress would not dare to go against the wishes of the planners. Nehru's emphatic statement, however, shattered Jinnah's dream. The only hope of Pakistan now lay in his rejection of the Cabinet Plan and in forcing the British to meet his demand before the Congress advanced towards constitution making.

The Muslim League Council thereupon met at Bombay on 27 July to review the whole issue in the light of the Congress president's latest declaration. At the concluding session of the Council on 29 July, Jinnah announced:

The League, throughout the negotiations, was moved by a sense of fair play and sacrificed the full sovereign state of Pakistan at the altar of the Congress for securing the independence of the whole of India. They voluntarily delegated three subjects to the Union, and by doing so did not commit a mistake. It was the highest order of statesmanship that the League displayed by making this concession. . . . But this has been treated with defiance and contempt. Then, are we alone to be guided by reason, justice, honesty and fairplay, when on the other hand there are perfidious dealings by the Congress?¹⁵⁷

Justifying the decision to reject the Cabinet Mission Plan, and declaring his resolve to launch 'direct action', Jinnah concluded his speech by quoting the Persian poet Firdousi: 'If you seek peace, we do not want war, but if you want war, we will accept it unhesitatingly.' The League called upon the Muslims throughout India to observe 16 August as 'Direct Action Day'.

Thus ended the prolonged efforts of the British Cabinet Ministers to bring about a settlement. Except for the immediate prospects of an Interim Government and a Constituent Assembly, the future appeared precariously problematic. For the Congress, however, one step forward was enough of a victory. By the end of July, elections to the Constituent Assembly were complete. In all, 296 seats had been assigned to the British-Indian Provinces. Of the 210 general seats, the Congress captured 201, and out of 78 seats reserved for the Muslims, the League won all but 5.

The viceroy could not stop the Congress from advancing towards the constituent assembly and the Interim Government. Nor could he feel happy at the League's call for non-cooperation. On 30 July he told

Nehru that 'it would be most unfortunate if we did not succeed in getting the Muslim League to join in the constituent assembly, since obviously it would be impossible to frame a complete constitution without the Muslims,' and requested him to give the League some assurances to bring them in. Nehru in reply explained that 'they certainly could not be given an assurance of Pakistan'.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, Nehru gave public assurance that, though the Congress had a majority in the constituent assembly, it would not overlook the interests of the minorities. He reiterated the Congress assertion that the constituent assembly would go by its sovereign status and solve India's internal problems without outside interference or influence.

Left wing Congress leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan criticized the Congress entry into the Constituent Assembly, saying that it was a British 'fabrication'. Disapproving this attitude the Congress president said: 'The Congress, after mature thinking and in accordance with the wishes of the country, has decided to go into the Constituent Assembly. . . . Everyone in the country should now strengthen the Congress and see that it treads on the right path and is not misled.'¹⁵⁹

Jinnah and the Muslim League were in no doubt that their entry into the Constituent Assembly would be like preparing the coffin for Pakistan. Because, the Congress, with its absolute majority, would prepare a constitution for a united sovereign India. Bidding goodbye to all constitutional methods, they could only think of changing the course of history by a Muslim upsurge. That appeared the safest way to bring the Congress and the British to terms with them. That an Interim Government was going to be formed at the Centre at the earliest greatly unnerved them. They, therefore, prepared for their proposed direct action in right earnest.

To face these fast-developing complications, the viceroy decided to bring in the Congress to share power so that the responsibility of the British could be reduced to a large extent. There was widespread labour trouble, encouraged by left-wing Congressmen who believed in revolution, Wavell reported home. He told the Secretary of State: 'The most urgent need is for a Central Government with popular support. If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary and they may put down the Communists, and try to control their own left-wing. . . . I dislike intensely the idea of having an Interim Government dominated by one party, but I feel that I must try to get Congress in as soon as possible.'¹⁶⁰ The viceroy thought of keeping places for the Muslim League in the Interim Government in the hope that they might join it later.

With the British Cabinet's approval, Wavell wrote to Nehru on 6 August inviting him to submit proposals for the formation of the Interim

Government. On 8 August, the Congress Working Committee decided to accept the invitation and issued an appeal to the Muslim League to join the Constituent Assembly. After consulting Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru conveyed his consent to the viceroy on 10 August: 'We would have welcomed the formation of a coalition government with the Muslim League. But, in view of the resolution adopted by and the statement recently made on behalf of the Muslim League it is not possible to expect that they will agree to co-operate at this stage. Any premature attempt to induce them to do so might produce a contrary result.'¹⁶¹ Yet, Nehru thought it wise to seek Jinnah's co-operation and met him on 15 August in Bombay in an attempt to reach an understanding with him on the formation of the new government. Jinnah not only refused co-operation, but at the end of a fruitless dialogue, told his followers that 'There will be no more meetings between me and Pandit Nehru.'

Jinnah's followers were ready for the next day, the fateful 16 August 1946. His ebullient lieutenant in Bengal, Premier Shaheed Suhrawardy, had already declared 16 August a public holiday and kept his private army prepared for direct action. He had surprised the Hindus but delighted the League by announcing that 'if the Congress were put into power, the result would be the declaration of complete independence by Bengal and the setting up of a parallel Government.'

It was a declaration not of Bengal's independence under the League Government, but of war in the streets of Calcutta under the banner of the League against the Hindu population. Little did Suhrawardy imagine what was in store for the city he loved so much, and little did he calculate how the overwhelmingly non-Muslim population of that great metropolis would react to the direct action of a Muslim group, however well organized or determined. In only four days, from 16 August to 20 August, murder, arson, plunder, loot, rioting and pillage, converted Calcutta into a hell of human barbarities and wanton cruelty. In those brief four days of frenzied fury more than 5,000 men, women and children, belonging to both the communities, were slaughtered in savage butchery and 15,000 persons suffered severe injury. India was stunned at the incident, destined to go down in history as the 'Great Calcutta Killing', with its echoes resounding all over the subcontinent in the months to come. Calcutta gave the green signal for the coming Indian civil war which was to continue for more than a year. 'Calcutta has given an ocular demonstration of what direct action is and how it is to be done,' wrote Gandhi while advising the nation to refrain from violence.¹⁶²

Expecting serious troubles ahead, the Labour Government advised the viceroy to allow Nehru to take over the Interim Government at once, and to retain the co-operation of the Congress. And, acting forthwith,

the viceroy saw to the installation of the new government on 2 September 1946. Nehru formed his Cabinet with Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Asaf Ali, Sarat Chandra Bose, Baldev Singh, Jagjivan Ram, Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Ali Zaheer, John Matthai and C.H. Bhabha. At the end of his oath at the swearing-in ceremony, he raised a *Jai Hind*, a slogan symbolic of the victory for which India had fought. For Gandhi, 'The door to *Purna Swaraj* has at last been opened.' In a note to Patel, Rajendra Prasad and others the same day, he advised: 'Abolish salt tax, remember Dandi March, bring together Hindus and Muslims, remove untouchability, adopt Khadi.'¹⁶³

Nehru and his colleagues assumed power when the country was in violent convulsion. Following the Calcutta killings, communal disturbances erupted in Bombay and Ahmedabad. Fearful of the suffering of his own community but forgetful of his own doings in bringing about the communal war, Jinnah started blaming the viceroy, Gandhi and the Congress for the deteriorating situation. Referring to the Calcutta episode he said: 'It was an organised plot to discredit the Muslim League and the Muslim League Ministry on the part of the Hindus elated by the doings of Viceroy who chose the manner and time of going ahead with the Interim Government ignoring the League.'¹⁶⁴ He accused the Congress Government at the Centre and in the eight provinces of misdeeds under the aegis of the British and with the help of their bayonets. At the same time, very much apprehensive of the Congress design for further steps towards freedom, Jinnah, in a volte face, decided to push the League into the Interim Government to oppose such designs. After bitter negotiations, the Muslim League members at last joined the Interim Government and took office on 26 October. This, again, created further complication at the Centre. Without effective power, and with hostile League ministers to be confronted on every major move, Nehru found himself in an unenviable position to face the crisis. Yet, he showed extraordinary determination and rose to the occasion.

India in the winter of 1946 was like a live volcano, emitting the fire of violence at various points. The gruesome outbreaks in Bengal's Noakhali and in Bihar put the Congress leadership to a severe test. While Nehru and Rajendra Prasad rushed to Bihar, Mahatma Gandhi left for the far-away Noakhali on a unique mission of peace. Addressing about ten thousand Hindus and Muslims at Laksham en route to Chaumuhani on 7 November, Gandhi announced: 'I have come to stay here with you as one of you. I have no provincialism in me. I claim to be an Indian and therefore a Bengali even as I am a Gujarati. I have vowed to myself that I will stay on here and die here if necessary, but I will not leave Bengal till the hatchet is finally buried. . . .'¹⁶⁵ For four long months, the Mahatma conducted his epic journey, covering numerous places, addressing in-

numerable gatherings and meeting hundreds of thousands of men so that sanity prevailed in a most dangerously sensitive part of the country.

Nehru, in the meanwhile, in a brief operational command in Bihar, put down the mob fury in that predominantly Hindu area and saved the Muslim minority from almost total extermination. During the second week of November, Garhmukteswar presented yet another orgy of mass violence. While communal violence caused great concern and distress to the Nehru-led Centre, the League leaders seemed content to wade through blood-soaked mud and mire to reach Pakistan.

It was amid such evergrowing dangers that the Indian National Congress met in its fifty-fourth session at Meerut on 23–24 November 1946. Jawaharlal Nehru having assumed office in the Central Government, Acharya J.B. Kripalani succeeded him as the President of the Congress. Gathering after six whole years, the Congress found itself face to face with great challenges. Since the Constituent Assembly was about to be summoned, it declared its objective as 'an independent sovereign Republic wherein all powers and authority are derived from the people'. It described the future of the Indian States as an integral problem of Indian independence, and viewed with strong disapproval the prevailing segregation of the Political Department from the Government of India. It further declared that every decision regarding the States should be taken by elected representatives of the people of the States, and that the representatives of the States for the Constituent Assembly should be chosen by their people. The freedom struggles of the people in the States were recognized as an essential part of the larger Indian struggle. The Congress condemned communal violence for political purposes as advocated by the Muslim League and warned all communities against revenge and reprisals.¹⁶⁶

Before the Congress met at Meerut, the viceroy had issued invitations for the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. But Jinnah ordered the League representatives not to participate in it. The Congress viewed this as yet another attempt to sabotage independence and perpetuate the deadlock. Strongly denouncing this obstructive policy, the Meerut Congress warned the League that if it decided not to come into the Constituent Assembly, it should withdraw from the Interim Government.

The deeper the deadlock, the more the blood that flowed. Groping in the dark, but yet trying to find light, Premier Attlee extended a personal invitation to Nehru and Jinnah to come to London for a fresh round of talks. So, accompanied by the viceroy, Nehru, Baldev Singh, Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan arrived in London on 3 December 1946.

Jinnah, at this stage, was passing through a mental metamorphosis. The Indian civil war had taught him the awesome lesson that, even if he

got his Pakistan, there would yet be millions of Muslims in Hindustan whose existence might be perpetually threatened by Hindu antagonism. The genie of communalism which he had himself released to do its worst would prove hard to contain in the foreseeable future, or rather might continue to grow after the birth of Pakistan. 'The exchange of populations will have to be considered seriously as far as possible,' he had thought after the Bihar tragedy.¹⁶⁷ But the enormity of the population discouraged him from further advocating that idea. In an overall perspective of the entire situation, he was having second thoughts concerning whether a return to the Cabinet Mission Plan might not be of greater advantage to Muslim areas as well as Muslim populations. It was at this time that he was invited to London to meet Attlee.

Throughout the brief duration of the London Conference from 3 December to 6 December, Jinnah did not manifest his real self but was in rather a subdued mood. In contrast, Nehru was vigorous in charging the League with seeking to obtain its ends by violence and playing a negative role within the Interim Government. Wavell was surprised to see Nehru's frequent and 'sudden outbursts' during his discussion with the British leaders. He had a long duel with Cripps, and at one time he threatened the British saying that the Congress was 'a revolutionary party'. He complained that 'the approach to the Muslim League to join the Interim Government had been made over his head', and alarmed the viceroy by saying that he would put everything to vote in the Cabinet and make the viceroy's position impossible.

The London Conference produced no result. It reminded a disgusted Wavell of a poem of Browning's which began, 'Let them fight it out, friends: things have gone too far.'¹⁶⁸ Nehru and Baldev Singh returned to India in a hurry on 7 December since the Constituent Assembly was to meet on 9 December, without the League members of course. Purposefully enough, Jinnah and Liaquat stayed on in England for further discussions with their hosts. And, quite surprisingly, within a few days, Jinnah was once again in his former form, announcing with greater vigour and determination that he would agree to nothing but a full-fledged Pakistan of his original design.

The most surprised man in India at Jinnah's extraordinary revival was Sardar Patel. Closely scrutinizing the former's latest trends of thought before the London negotiations, the Sardar had come to believe that there was a possibility of the League accepting a united India with autonomy for the proposed Pakistan provinces. But Jinnah's reversion to the theory of partition while still in London was most intriguing. Patel suspected Stafford Cripps as being behind the game and wrote to him angrily:

You called the League delegation there to London at a time when there was some realisation that violence is a game at which both parties can play and the mild Hindu also, when driven to desperation, can retaliate as brutally as a fanatic Muslim. Just when the time for settlement was reached Jinnah got the invitation, and he was able to convince the Muslims once again that he has been able to get more concessions by creating trouble and violence. . . . You must have seen what Jinnah has said in London immediately after the debate. He swears by Pakistan and everything conceded to him is to be used as a lever to work to that end. You wish that we should agree to help in this mad dream. . . . All of us here feel that there has been a betrayal.¹⁶⁹

The real brain behind the scene, however, was Winston Churchill, playing a greater part than Cripps or anybody else. In this connection, the Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah Papers reveal an interesting episode. When Jinnah decided to discuss the matter with Churchill who was the Leader of the Opposition, the latter thought it judicious not to come out openly into the picture because of his fear of the Congress reaction. Yet, he wanted to be his invisible mentor at that most crucial point. Unbelievable though it seems, Churchill named himself Miss E.A. Gilliatt while in correspondence with Jinnah. From 28 Hyde Park Gate in London, he wrote the following top-secret letter to the Quaid-e-Azam on 11 December 1946: 'My dear Mr Jinnah, I should greatly like to accept your kind invitation to luncheon on December 12. I feel, however, that it would perhaps be wiser for us not to be associated publicly at this juncture. I greatly valued our talk the other day, and I now enclose the address to which any telegrams you may wish to send me can be sent without attracting attention in India. I will always sign myself "Gilliatt". Perhaps you will let me know to what address I should telegraph to you and how you will sign yourself.'¹⁷⁰ The address to which Jinnah was advised to communicate was Miss E.A. Gilliatt, 6 Westminster Gardens, London S.W.1.

Brief though it is, the letter is clear evidence of the Churchill-Jinnah deal in those final days of the Indian tangle. Jinnah's reply to this letter and his assumed name or address were not preserved. As before, Churchill's visible or invisible hand operated in building up Jinnah and in laying the foundation of Pakistan.

Jinnah returned to India in January 1947. On 20 January 1947 the Constituent Assembly of India met to proceed with its great work. At the end of the month, the Working Committee of the Muslim League, meeting in Karachi, raised the demand that the Constituent Assembly be dissolved. Communal disturbances by then were playing havoc in the country, having spread into the Punjab. The Congress, in retaliation to the League's proposal about the Constituent Assembly, demanded

that the viceroy dismiss the League members from the Interim Government. Wavell advised Nehru on 1 February not to invite a chaotic condition by forcing out the Muslim League from the Central Government, which the Congress was in a position to do. The crisis began to deepen as the administration was more or less coming to a standstill.

By then, the Labour Government had only one option left to them — to let the world know that the British wanted to quit, leaving India to the Indian parties to settle its fate. Thus there came the ultimate declaration of Prime Minister Attlee on 20 February 1947, announcing the date before which the British-Indian Empire would cease to exist.

6. India Wins Independence

Sixty-two years before 1947, when the National Congress was born and its first session dispersed, an unknown Englishman had commented that 'It was by force that India was won, and it is by force that India must be governed. . . . If we were to withdraw, it would be, not in favour of the most fluent tongue, or the most ready pen, but for the strongest arm and the sharpest sword.'¹⁷¹ The Congress, at that time, did not ask the British to withdraw, but when at length it did, it was by the fluent tongue and the ready pen that it fought its battle for freedom, rendering the strongest arm and the sharpest sword of imperial Britain ineffective. Having tried hard to retain the empire till the last, the British finally conceded defeat by deciding to withdraw.

On 20 February 1947, Prime Minister Clement Attlee in his famous statement on Indian policy announced that 'in the opinion of His Majesty's Government the time had come for responsibility for the Government of India to pass into Indian hands. . . . His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948.'¹⁷² Simultaneous with this the prime minister announced that the 'war-time appointment' of Lord Wavell as viceroy was being terminated and that Lord Louis Mountbatten was being appointed in his place.

The immediate effect of the announcement was that it set at rest all doubts about the *bona fides* of the Labour Government concerning giving India independence. The Congress had been demanding it for years, and having now been assured of it, it stood prepared to inherit the difficult legacies and face the coming problems bravely. Attlee's decision to close the chapter of Indo-British conflict 'in a manner worthy of civilised nations' was gratifying indeed, and the Congress High Command found the issue of Pakistan the only stumbling-block to freedom at that hour of triumph.

Gandhi was still in East Bengal on his healing mission when the Attlee announcement shook India. From there he was required to hurry to Bihar. The main burden of political decisions at that grave hour fell on Nehru and Patel, Pakistan being their chief concern. If Jinnah stood by partition before independence, they decided to unnerve him by a counter demand that if partition of India was a must, it must be a partition within the proposed partition.

It was V.P. Menon, a self-made Indian who rose from a humble position to the highest in the administration and came to enjoy the confidence of his British superiors (including that of the viceroy), who discussed with Sardar Patel about a possible formula to end the impasse. Since a united India under the Cabinet Mission Plan had undesirable implications and since Jinnah under British patronage would never give up his demand for Pakistan, it was time for the Congress to agree to the partition of India on condition that the Punjab, Bengal and Assam would also be partitioned for separation of predominantly non-Muslim areas of those three provinces. This would either force Jinnah to accept a truncated Pakistan or to give up his demand for partition and think of some other alternative. Patel was convinced. Nehru, too, wanted to get rid of the League with as small a sacrifice of Muslim territory as possible, i.e., only territory that actually had a Muslim majority, in order to rescue the rest of India from endless chaos. Other Congress leaders were also coming to think on these lines.

The Congress Working Committee thus had to take a crucial decision in this regard. Meeting in Delhi on 6-8 March 1947, it took stock of what was happening in the Punjab at that time. There the Muslim League, in order to pull down a popular coalition ministry, launched a savage agitation of widespread violence.

These tragic events [said the Working Committee in its resolution on the Punjab] have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore it is necessary to find a way out which involved the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.¹⁷³

This resolution was the first indication from the Congress side that a partition of the country could be considered not on Jinnah's terms alone but on Congress terms as well. It was not the Punjab alone which required this approach, but, as Kripalani declared a few days later, the same principle applied to Bengal also.

Gandhi was taken completely by surprise. From a remote riot-torn place in Bihar, while addressing a gathering of fifty thousand men and

women, he reacted to the High Command's policy saying that 'he could not give consent to the idea of partitioning Punjab and Bengal or any other province'.¹⁷⁴ On 20 March he wrote to Patel: 'Try to explain to me your Punjab resolution if you can. I cannot understand it.' To Nehru he wrote: 'I would like to know the reason behind it.'

Patel in a terse reply said: 'It is difficult to explain to you the resolution about the Punjab. It was adopted after the deepest deliberation. Nothing has been done in a hurry or without full thought. That you had expressed your views against it, we learnt only from the papers. But you are, of course, entitled to say what you feel right.' Nehru tried to reason with the mahatma, saying: 'Indeed this is the only answer to partition as demanded by Jinnah. I found people in Punjab agreeable to this proposal — except Muslims as a rule.'¹⁷⁵

Gandhi remained unconvinced. The political realism with which Nehru, Patel and other Congress leaders had to keep pace forced them to realize that Gandhian idealism was an almost impossible basis for political action in the India of 1947. The outgoing viceroy felt that the Congress partition plan was premature, but Nehru prevailed upon him to believe that the only real alternative to the Cabinet Mission Plan was the partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

Lord Wavell left India on 23 March 1947. Attlee removed him rather unceremoniously in his attempt to tackle the Indian situation through a new viceroy, enjoying his and Churchill's confidence as well as that of Nehru in India, Lord Louis Mountbatten. Demanding the greatest goodwill of the greatest number of people, Mountbatten declared at his swearing-in ceremony on 24 March:

This is not a normal Viceroyalty on which I am embarking. His Majesty's Government are resolved to transfer power by June 1948; and since new constitutional arrangements must be made, and many complicated questions of administration resolved — all of which will take time to put into effect — this means that a solution must be reached within the next few months. . . . In the meanwhile, every one of us must do what he can to avoid any word or action which might lead to further bitterness or add to the toll of innocent victims.¹⁷⁶

The last British viceroy decided to rush desperately to prepare the 'ground for the transfer of power and take his countrymen back home as honourably as possible. Four main objectives lay before him: to persuade the Congress and the League to agree to an acceptable final plan, to terminate British relations with the Indian princes, to effect an orderly withdrawal of the British from India, and finally, to try to retain India in the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Just after his arrival in India, Mountbatten requested Gandhi to come to Delhi, and the latter left Bihar as early as he conveniently could for a dialogue with the viceroy. From 31 March onwards they had six meetings of two hours each, during which Gandhi advised the viceroy 'to have the courage to see the truth and act by it'. Ready to go to any length to keep India united, he pleaded in utmost sincerity that Jinnah should be forthwith invited to form a Central Interim Government of his own with members of the League.¹⁷⁷ Agreeing with Gandhi's idea, Maulana Azad also told the viceroy that 'such a plan would be the quickest way to stop bloodshed, and the simplest way of turning over power'.¹⁷⁸ But when Mountbatten discussed this so-called Gandhi Plan about an all-India Jinnah Government with Nehru, the latter showed no interest saying that Jinnah would never want to form any such government on any terms. When Gandhi himself failed to persuade the Congress Working Committee to accept his views, he informed the viceroy:

I felt sorry that I could not convince them of the correctness of my plan from every point of view. Nor could they dislodge me from my position although I had not closed my mind against every argument. Thus, I have to ask you to omit me from your consideration. Congressmen, who are in the Interim Government are stalwarts, seasoned servants of the nation and, therefore so far as the Congress point of view is concerned, they will be [your] complete advisers.¹⁷⁹

Feeling desolate and forlorn because of the politics of partition, Gandhi decided to devote more of his time to restoring peace in the country, with the hope that reason would ultimately prevail. Nehru, on the other hand, in his practical and pragmatic approach to an ending of India's woes, came to prefer a mutilated Pakistan to a bitter co-existence with the politics of communalism. He and other leaders visualized Jinnah's downfall by conceding to him a truncated Pakistan with no prospect of economic prosperity. The viceroy felt only too happy to see that the Congress was gradually coming round to believe in some kind of partition while, at the same time, he dismissed from his thought Jinnah's original Pakistan as the real form of solution.

So, Mountbatten began his dialogue with the League leader, seeking his views on what would be the most correct step for the British to take. It was on 8 April 1947 that Jinnah got the worst shock of his life when the viceroy told him that the Pakistan of his demand was unacceptable. It particularly surprised him that Mountbatten had fallen into the trap of the Congress and accepted their views about partition within partition. After their crucial discussion that day, the viceroy noted:

I invited Mr Jinnah to put forward his arguments for partition. He recited the classic ones. I then pointed out that his remarks applied also to the

partition of the Punjab and Bengal, and that by sheer logic if I accepted his arguments in the case of India as a whole, I had also to apply them in the case of these two Provinces. Whilst admitting my logic, he expressed himself most upset at my trying to give him a 'moth eaten' Pakistan. He said that this demand for partitioning the Punjab and Bengal was a bluff on the part of Congress to try and frighten him off Pakistan. He was not to be frightened off so easily; and he would be sorry if I were taken in by the Congress bluff. I replied 'I would not be taken in; because if I agreed to such partition, it would be on your able advocacy; but I could not of course allow your theories to stop short at the Provinces'. He was most distressed, and said that it would greatly weaken his Pakistan, and appealed to me not to destroy the unity of Bengal and the Punjab, which had national characteristics in common: common history, common ways of life; and where the Hindus have stronger feelings as Bengalis or Punjabis than they have as members of the Congress.¹⁸⁰

Jinnah's frantic arguments did not convince the viceroy. In counter-argument the latter pointed out that any argument which Jinnah produced for not agreeing to partition within the Punjab and Bengal applied with even greater force to India as a whole. After two hours of pleading and prayer, Jinnah left the viceregal palace that evening a most distressed man. He had not expected such a proposal from a British viceroy which ran contrary to the hopes he had received from his patrons in England. 'I am afraid', wrote a gleeful Mountbatten, 'I drove the old gentleman quite mad, because whichever way his arguments went I always pursued it to a stage beyond which he did not wish it to go.'¹⁸¹

Next day a dejected Jinnah returned to tell the viceroy that nothing would bring peace to India except a full Pakistan since anything less would produce further strife and bloodshed. But the viceroy expressed his categorical opinion that it was impossible for him to agree to the partition of India without also agreeing to the partition of the provinces where the same majority-minority problem remained. That afternoon Mountbatten inflicted on the crestfallen Quaid-e-Azam a long lecture on the need of keeping India united. He painted a picture of the greatness that India could achieve — 'four hundred million people of different races and creeds, all bound together by a central Union Government, with all the economic strength that would accrue to them from increased industrialization, playing a great part in world affairs as the most progressive single entity in the Far East'. Jinnah did not show any sign of being attracted towards the prospects of a united independent India even under his own Prime Ministership since, as he said, 'the behaviour of the Hindus had made it impossible for the Muslims to share in this', but went back with the sad thoughts of a reduced Pakistan which the Congress had injected into the viceroy's mind.

The emerging concept of a moth-eaten Pakistan was considered in

Congress circles as a substantial victory. 'The object in view,' observed the *Manchester Guardian*, 'clearly stated by many pro-Congress journals is to reduce the Muslim majority provinces to such small dimensions that the idea of Pakistan should no longer appear workable or attractive to the most ardent Muslim.'¹⁸² To Sardar Patel it seemed that the moment the viceroy announced the partition of Bengal, the Muslims of that province would desert the League in order to preserve the unity of Bengal. He told Mountbatten that the same thing might happen in the Punjab, and 'it would not be unlikely that there would be a revolt of the League against Mr Jinnah if he had nothing better than the Sind, and possibly half of the Punjab to offer them for Pakistan, if Congress still retained their hold on the N.W.F.P.'¹⁸³ Maulana Azad, still hopeful of a united India, came to feel that a truncated Pakistan would bring disaster to the Muslims, and that Jinnah 'would be committing suicide' by accepting it.

The calculations of the Congress leaders were not entirely incorrect. The evil omen of the partition of Bengal as well as of the sure loss of Calcutta to the Muslim East Pakistan perturbed the League Premier of Bengal, Shaheed Suhrawardy, so much that he thought of a campaign for a united sovereign Bengal, independent of both Hindustan and Pakistan. Quite surprisingly, Mountbatten gave his blessings to the Bengal premier, wishing him success in the campaign, saying: 'I considered it far better to keep Bengal as one economic unit than to have it partitioned.'¹⁸⁴ When Jinnah heard of this from the viceroy, he said without hesitation, 'I should be delighted. What is the use of Bengal without Calcutta; they had much better remain united and independent; I am sure that they would be on friendly terms with us.'¹⁸⁵

The Congressmen in Bengal, however, strongly denounced Suhrawardy's grandiose plan which painted the united sovereign Bengal as 'a great country indeed, the richest and the most prosperous in India . . . rich in agriculture, rich in industry and commerce and in course of time it will be one of the most powerful and progressive States of the world.'¹⁸⁶ To them it appeared nothing but a hoax, and the Bengal Hindus stood for the partition of the province. Sensing Suhrawardy's hidden tricks, Shyama Prasad Mukherji told Mountbatten: 'Sovereign undivided Bengal will be a virtual Pakistan.'¹⁸⁷ And, Nehru declared that he would not favour an independent Bengal unless it was closely linked to Hindustan.

The campaign for a united sovereign Bengal by Suhrawardy and his supporters only proved how desperate was their feeling at the prospect of a limited Pakistan. Nehru correctly assessed their intentions when he said that 'beneath the sweet and reasonable appeal of the Bengal Premier not to split Bengal, there was a sinister hint that if Calcutta was

taken away from Eastern Bengal there would not be much left of it to take.'

Going by the general mood of the Congress High Command, the viceroy quickly made up his mind, and in mid-April 1947 informed the Secretary of State that a 'partition is probably inevitable'.¹⁸⁸ On 17 April, the Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, presented the considered opinion of the Congress to the viceroy: 'The point has now been reached at which the Congress must reluctantly accept the fact that the Muslim League will never voluntarily come into a Union of India. Rather than have a battle we shall let them have their Pakistan, provided you will allow the Punjab and Bengal to be partitioned in a fair manner.'¹⁸⁹ The Congress had no doubt about getting the whole of Assam for India except the Muslim majority district of Sylhet. Jinnah, in the meantime, apprehended even more radical steps by the Congress to seize power, including an army *coup d'état*. Bitterly complaining against the partition of the provinces, he was helplessly coming round to agree to a 'moth-eaten Pakistan'.

But the issue of the Frontier Province appeared to him even more problematic than the partition of Bengal and Punjab. That province, under a Congress Ministry and strongly under the influence of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, stood for a united India with its Pathan population showing continuing disfavour of Pakistan. To Jinnah, a Pakistan without the Frontier Province was an inconceivable proposition. Despondently therefore he tried to destabilize the situation there by inciting fanaticism and violence through a Muslim League movement. Jinnah's trump-card was that if West Punjab became Pakistan, the Frontier Province would remain cut off from the rest of India, and find its existence impossible as a part of Hindustan. He would not consider that, if the two wings of Pakistan could exist separated by a distance of seven hundred miles, what would prevent the Frontier remaining a part of India, separated by a much smaller distance.

Mountbatten himself got obsessed with this problem once he arrived at his conclusion about partition. A Pakistan without the Frontier Province, he thought, was not only unworkable, but would certainly be unacceptable to Jinnah. In a surreptitious way, therefore, the viceroy decided to play a personal role in giving the Frontier to Pakistan. A secret understanding was worked out with Jinnah, Liaquat and some other League leaders by which the viceroy was himself to visit Peshawar to fathom the popular feeling when the League would organize a huge mass rally of its supporters to demonstrate the people's desire to join Pakistan, whereupon he would find it easy to announce a policy of 'justice'.

It was thus that Mountbatten flew to Peshawar on 28 April 1947 to

present himself before an estimated gathering of fifty thousand men and women, collected by the League. The Frontier Congressmen and the Red Shirts of the Frontier Gandhi wanted to organize a counter-demonstration of a much larger population to show their opposition to Pakistan, but the Congress premier, Khan Sahib, to avoid violence and bloodshed, did not permit it. The viceroy with Lady Mountbatten, appearing in olive-green uniform, waved to the slogan-raising mass in a gesture of goodwill from an elevated ground overlooking a vast park. As loud shouts of 'Pakistan Zindabad' and 'Mountbatten Zindabad' were raised, the viceroy was impressed. Knowing how the entire show had been engineered by the League with the active connivance of the anti-Congress governor, Olaf Caroe, Khan Sahib told Mountbatten soon after his return from the rally that the Pathan population did not want to break away from the rest of India, but if such a future was forced upon them, they would better think of a separate Pathanistan. Giving no indication of his reaction to such an unexpected proposal, but expressing anxiety about the future of the province, the viceroy nevertheless disclosed before the governor and the premier what he thought of doing. 'I want to transfer power in terms of the will of the people. Ideally I would have a plebiscite here,' he said.¹⁹⁰

The Congress High Command soon got an inkling of what was in the viceroy's mind, but confident of the Pathan population's overwhelming sympathy and support for Indian unity and their expressed desire to stay with India, they did not feel discouraged at the idea of a plebiscite. Had they anticipated the dangerous influence of religious fanaticism on an otherwise simple-minded population at the time of the plebiscite, they would either have rejected the idea or demanded a third option before the people besides Hindustan and Pakistan, namely, Pathanistan. At that moment, the Congress went by their belief that the Pathans would reject Pakistan, and Mountbatten felt hopeful about being able to assure Jinnah on his return that 'any election will take place solely on the issue of Pakistan or Hindustan'.¹⁹¹

Having thus found solutions to most of the supposedly insoluble problems, the viceroy next engaged himself in preparing his plan for partition. The Congress High Command was on the alert. On 23 April, Nehru sent request to Gandhi to return to Delhi from Bihar for urgent consultations with the Congress Working Committee.

The first week of May [Nehru wrote] is likely to see the formulation of Mountbatten's scheme for the future. This is obviously important and will shape our future. His intention is to have a rough framework ready by then — to discuss this in detail and then finalise it after reference to the British Government. He expects to get through all these processes by the 3rd week of May. According to this programme, the first week of May will

be of considerable importance and all of us would like you to be near us for advice and guidance.¹⁹²

Gandhi returned, but showed no change in his attitude. He advised the High Command not to barter away India's unity for any concession at British hands. But the Working Committee decided upon partition as the 'lesser evil' when the country had been overtaken by forces of chaos and disruption, pointing to greater evils. To Gandhi, in his rock-like posture, even if the worst came to the worst, he would yet unhesitatingly choose chaos, but 'in no circumstances would he accept partitioning of the country at British hands as the price of peace'.¹⁹³

No less sorry was Jinnah. On 30 April, when he saw the preliminary draft plan prepared by the viceroy, he grumbled, protested, charged the British with insincerity, and condemned the plan saying that it 'would lead to terrible complications — to confusion — to bitter confusion — and bloodshed'.¹⁹⁴

Mountbatten showed the full draft of his plan only to Nehru and Jinnah without giving them a copy of it. He also discussed its outline with the members of his own staff, including V.P. Menon, and with Patel, Baldev Singh and Liaquat Ali Khan. Whether they liked it or not, Mountbatten wanted no further discussion, and sent his chief of staff Lord Ismay and his private secretary George Abell to London on 2 May 1947 to present the draft to the Cabinet. Stating that both the Congress and the League considered the division of India inevitable, the plan suggested that the proposed division would involve district-wise partition of the Punjab and Bengal, and the appointment of a boundary commission; that the members of the legislative assemblies of the districts concerned should decide whether they would prefer to remain in the Indian Union or have a separate State for their areas; that while the present Constituent Assembly for the Indian Union would remain intact, the members representing the partitioned areas would cease to be its members and go in for another Constituent Assembly; that the North-West Frontier Province should be given an opportunity to decide whether to join the proposed Indian Union or join Pakistan; and that the Sylhet district in Assam should be given the option of joining the Muslim part created by the partition of Bengal.

The contents of the plan leaked out. Various views were expressed in the press in discussing its defects. 'For the first time,' commented the *Hindustan Times*, 'since Lord Mountbatten assumed Viceroyalty the feeling that he may not be playing fair has come among some Congressmen and Sikh leaders. The reason for this is the Viceroy's reported attitude towards the Frontier Ministry and his plan to divide the Punjab into 12 non-Muslim and 17 Muslim districts thereby dealing a blow to Sikh interests.'¹⁹⁵ Suggestions were put forward that the Frontier Province

should also be given a chance to decide whether it would like to become an independent territory.

The viceroy felt annoyed that a top-confidential draft should become a subject of wild discussion all over the country before it was finalized. At the same time, he collected information about the reaction of the Congress Party to the plan in general to understand the points of its objection. And, to his displeasure he found that the Congress Working Committee had caught him at his weakest point as regards the provision for the Frontier Province. 'There is no occasion for any change in the Frontier,' felt the Working Committee. 'The last election was fought on the issue of Pakistan and the verdict having been given by the electorate (in favour of Indian Union) the present M.L.As. of the Frontier Assembly are competent to decide the future of the province.'¹⁹⁶

While Premier Attlee and his Cabinet colleagues remained busy with the draft plan in London, Mountbatten proceeded to Simla in the second week of May to finalize it with the help of V.P. Menon and Eric Mievill, his private secretary. Apprehensive of what London might do, he invited Nehru to be present near him for his suggestions when required. On 10 May, he received the plan, returned from home with some critical modifications which, surprisingly, had ruined the very spirit of the original. The same night, when an anxious viceroy showed it to Nehru, the latter reacted to it so sharply that all previous exercises at an agreed solution seemed to have ended in nothing. Next day, Nehru exposed the sinister design of the Labour Government contained in their proposed modifications:

In the new proposals, the whole approach has been changed completely and is at total variance with our own approach in the course of recent talks. The proposals start with the rejection of an Indian Union as the successor to power and invite the claims of large numbers of succession States who are permitted to unite if they so wish in two or more States. . . . It appears to me that the inevitable and obvious consequences of the proposals and the approach in them are (a) to invite the Balkanisation of India, (b) to provoke certain civil conflict and to add to violence and disorder, (c) to a further breakdown of the Central authority which alone can prevent the chaos that is growing, (d) to demoralise the army, the police, and the central services.¹⁹⁷

Nehru's greatest objection was to the Cabinet's desire to convert some of the bigger princely States into independent kingdoms. He told the viceroy that unless and until the Labour Government changed its approach drastically, the serious consequences of the failure of the plan would squarely rest with the British.

The viceroy informed his home government how Nehru's letter had come as a 'bombshell', and finding no other way he tried to assert

himself to save his plan from total ruin. With suggestions from Nehru, and with the help of V.P. Menon, and in complete secrecy, a fresh draft was prepared then and there. Attlee, in the meanwhile, getting the viceroy's report about Nehru's threats, asked him to come to England immediately for final consultations. And, on 18 May, Mountbatten flew to London with the newly prepared plan to which Nehru signified his consent in writing.

Even at that stage Jinnah kept on telling his followers that he would fight to the finish to get his Pakistan. But it was within everybody's knowledge that he had given his personal consent to a truncated Pakistan. To escape resentment as well as to divert the attention of the Muslims he had to suddenly conceive of a new demand — an eight hundred mile corridor through the heart of Hindustan to link West Pakistan with East Pakistan. It was retorted in the Congress papers that 'if existence of Pakistan is dependent on the corridor, it will never come into being'.¹⁹⁸ Strong protests were voiced by various Congress leaders against such 'bullying tactics' while Jinnah's mouthpiece, *The Dawn*, declared that 'if Muslims can win Pakistan — as indeed they have already won it — they can just as well build a corridor somewhere for the linking up of the two segments of Pakistan.'¹⁹⁹ To silence such reckless talk Nehru came out strongly to suggest that the Congress would not enter into any public controversy with Jinnah when final decisions were being taken. 'The demand for a corridor,' he said, 'is fantastic and absurd. We stand for a Union of India with the right to particular areas to opt out. We envisage no compulsion. If there is no proper settlement on this basis without further claims being advanced, then we shall proceed with making and implementing the Constitution for the Union of India.'²⁰⁰

Exercising his superb statecraft, Mountbatten in London was able to convince the authorities that his revised plan should be accepted and rushed through without any further obstacle from the British side. He was even able to convince Churchill that the transfer of power was right on the anvil, although the Conservative leader still hoped that the major Indian States like Hyderabad would remain independent under the plan.

The Mountbatten Plan, approved by the British Cabinet, thus became the final verdict on India in respect of partition and independence. The viceroy returned to Delhi on the last day of May 1947. He decided to obtain the consent of the Congress and the League, and of the Sikhs to the plan forthwith, and invited the leaders to gather on 2 June 1947. That day, Nehru, Patel and Kripalani on behalf of the Congress; Jinnah, Liaquat and Nishtar representing the League, and Sardar Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs met the viceroy to discuss the Plan and accept it

for implementation. It was a momentous occasion for the big seven, called upon as they were to preside over the destiny of a subcontinent, and also its dissolution as a united entity.

The Mountbatten Plan envisaged that while the existing Constituent Assembly would frame the Constitution of India, this Constitution would not apply to those parts of India which were unwilling to accept it. There should be, therefore, another Constituent Assembly for those non-participating areas. It would then be possible to determine the authority or authorities to whom the British should transfer power.

It was necessary, thus, that the Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab should meet in two parts — one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members of the two parts of each Assembly, sitting separately, would vote on whether or not the province should be partitioned. Division of the province would take place if a simple majority of either part decided in favour of it. With partition decided upon, a separate Constituent Assembly would frame a constitution for the separated areas. A Boundary Commission would demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of Bengal and Punjab.

While the Mountbatten Plan provided that the Sind Legislative Assembly would decide whether to join the existing Constituent Assembly or the new one, it contained a different provision for the North-West Frontier Province. Describing the position of the province as exceptional because of its geographical situation, if a part of the Punjab decided to break away, the plan proposed to ascertain the popular will through a referendum. A referendum was also prescribed for the district of Sylhet.

The Mountbatten Plan did not define the position of the Indian States clearly by announcing that 'His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of May 1946 remains unchanged.' The Cabinet Mission Plan had also left the issue vague by making contradictory provisions. It had said that with the attainment of independence by British India 'the relationship which has hitherto existed between the Rulers of the States and the British Crown will no longer be possible'. At the same time it had suggested that 'Paramountcy can neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new Government'. In the context of such anomalies, it was obvious that the Mountbatten Plan intended to leave the States to themselves to come to terms with the new Indian Governments at the lapse of Paramountcy.

After the viceroy explained the plan to the big seven, Nehru, on behalf of the Congress gave his consent to it saying 'there could never be complete approval of the Plan from Congress, but, on the balance, they

accepted it.^{'201} Jinnah still expressed his inability to agree to all points, but the viceroy demanded consent from all concerned before that date expired at midnight.

2 June 1947 was a Monday, the day of Gandhi's silence. Immediately after the big seven left the Viceregal palace after their tacit approval of the Mountbatten Plan, Gandhi went to see the viceroy. His silence during this meeting was symbolic of his disapproval of all that the viceroy did that day in destroying the unity of India. On the back of five separate old envelopes he only penned a few words and passed them over to Mountbatten. 'I am sorry I can't speak,' said one note, 'but I know you do not want me to break my silence.' After Gandhi left the place, the viceroy noted with a sense of relief: 'God must be on our side, since Gandhi, who came to see me after the Conference (presumably to implement his declared policy of stopping the present agreement) was afflicted by a day of silence.'²⁰² The impending division of India had made Gandhi so unhappy that only on the previous day he had said sadly:

I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark. . . . But may be, all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness. I shall perhaps not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it. Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection.²⁰³

That very day, 2 June, the Congress Working Committee accepted the Mountbatten Plan, and the Congress president sent the message to the viceroy to that effect. Baldev Singh too confirmed the Sikh consent to the plan. And, appearing personally at midnight, Jinnah still showed his reluctance to give his consent in writing. But when Mountbatten showed him a message from Churchill that if the Muslim League did not accept the Plan, it would spell the death-knell of his demand for Pakistan, Jinnah at last confirmed acceptance by a mere nod of his head. More than he, his Conservative mentor wanted a Pakistan, however diminutive or deformed.

The next day, on 3 June, the big seven met the viceroy again when the administrative consequences of the plan were discussed. Mountbatten disclosed his intention at that time that the transfer of power should be effected at a much earlier date than June 1948. That evening, the viceroy announced the plan over All-India Radio. Then, following this broadcast, Nehru addressed the nation and paid tribute to the Mahatma whose leadership and struggle had brought India to the eve of independence.

The Mountbatten Plan, having been accepted and announced, the viceroy surprised India by disclosing the exact date of the Indian inde-

pendence soon thereafter. On 4 June, in his most spectacular press conference in New Delhi, presided over by Sardar Patel, he declared: 'The date of the transfer of power is going to be much earlier, this year, somewhere round about by August. . . . I think the transfer could be about the 15th August.'²⁰⁴

Only about ten weeks intervened between the Mounbatten Plan of 3 June and the date of independence on 15 August. It was going to be a race against time to prepare for the territorial partition of a great country, of its assets, and of the army. The Congress High Command as well as its members in the Interim Government were thus faced with immensely difficult problems in preparing the country both for partition and independence. Among numerous issues, two major problems required anxious consideration, namely, the fate of the Frontier Province and the future of the Indian States in the perspective of the Mountbatten Plan.

The British, in their desire to build Pakistan, had played one of their most subtle diplomatic tricks on the Congress as regard the North-West Frontier Province. It was one thing to think of West Punjab and East Bengal as parts of Pakistan since the Muslim majority of both those regions desired separation from India. Not so was the case with the Frontier Muslims who constituted almost the entire population of that Province. In their own interest they had expressed their desire to link their fate with a vast and prosperous India, being sure of their autonomous provincial existence within the frame of a democratic republic, and perpetually under a Muslim provincial ministry of their own. There being no fear of a Hindu domination, they found no reason to feel attracted towards a poor and small Pakistan, knowing for certain that, once in Pakistan, the Pathan population would suffer the domination of the Punjabis.

The Mountbatten Plan however shattered their hopes by imposing a referendum when the Muslim League had been carrying on for months a fanatical religious movement to serve political ends. Reacting against the plan, the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, wrote to Mahatma Gandhi from Peshawar on 8 June:

I have consulted all my important workers and we all are of the considered opinion that we cannot agree to the holding of the referendum on the issues contained in para 4 [of the plan]. Moreover the conditions prevailing in the Province at the moment are such that the holding of the referendum will lead to serious violence. We are also against Pakistan and would like to have a free Pathan State within India.²⁰⁵

On 11 June a joint meeting of the members of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, the Congress Parliamentary Party and the chiefs

of the Khudai Khidmatgars was held, together with the representatives from all over the province where it was decided not to take part in the referendum unless it was on the issue of Pakistan or Pathanistan.

But time was against the Frontier Congress. Firstly, once accepted by the Congress Party, the Plan was more or less sacrosanct. And, secondly, there was absolutely no time to mobilize popular opinion in favour of independent Pathanistan. Added to this was the League propaganda that, with West Pakistan intervening between India and the Frontier, there was no alternative for the Pathans except joining Pakistan. Finally, the viceroy himself persuaded Khan Sahib to believe that a province of only three million people could not exist in separation as an independent State. The stubborn premier, however, continued to insist that his province would never join Pakistan. And, the Frontier Congress did not abandon the idea of Pathanistan till the end, even though it was not a choice before the voters.

When scope for a free Pathanistan in the referendum was not agreed to, the Frontier Congress finally decided not to take part in voting. Writing on their behalf the Congress President informed the viceroy: 'We have accepted the Plan. . . . At the same time we cannot impose any course of action on the N.W.F.P. to which the leaders and people there are opposed. . . . They are totally averse to taking part in a referendum which must turn purely on the communal issue.' Simultaneously, Gandhi dispelled the fear of Mountbatten regarding the Congress opposition to the referendum and consequent bloodshed saying: 'Badshah Khan writes to me to say that he had failed in his move for a free Pathanistan, therefore, the referendum would go on without any interference by his followers, the latter abstaining from voting either way. He fully realises that in this case the Frontier would probably go to Pakistan.'²⁰⁶

Both Gandhi and the Frontier Gandhi, in their keen desire to save the Pathan race from a fierce internecine war, gave up their confrontation with the League. As a result, the referendum went in favour of Pakistan. Less than three lakhs of people decided the fate of a province while the Congress bowed to the inexorable forces of the partition policy.

If the Frontier was lost to India because of the intricacies of the Mountbatten Plan, the Congress remained most alert against the British machinations in respect of the princely States. Popular movements had gone on for long in several of the States, but the rulers did not read the signs of times and join the national mainstream willingly, in spite of the call from the Congress to do so. The more powerful among them, like the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharaja of Kashmir, and the Nawab of Bhopal dreamt of complete independence for their States at the departure of the British, and went ahead with their plans accordingly. This the

Congress High Command would not tolerate. On 18 April 1947, Nehru declared at the All-India States Peoples' Conference at Gwalior that 'those States that did not join the Constituent Assembly now would be regarded as hostile States and would have to bear the consequences of being so regarded.' He directed the *Praja Mandals* to demand the setting up of constituent assemblies in their respective States to frame their own constitutions.²⁰⁷ The princes got alarmed. The less ambitious among them thought of a compromising policy while the powerful ones decided 'to take up the challenge' under the patronage of the British. Nehru wanted to bring them to their knees with the support of people's organizations.

There was not an iota of doubt in the mind of the Congress High Command that the British were more or less determined to see that at least some of the prominent princes, being the most faithful allies of His Majesty's Government, should maintain their separate existence in any future arrangement. Churchill, Attlee, and Mountbatten entertained the same intention in varying degrees till the last hour of their policy-making power. That being so, when Mountbatten was finalizing his plan, Nehru cautioned him that Britain's legalistic approach towards the princes in terms of some antiquated treaties was totally unrealistic in the context of transfer of power to Indian hands and, if persisted in, would be 'a definite invitation to at least the major States to remain independent kingdoms, presumably as feudatories or allies of Britain'. He pointed out how people's organizations everywhere demanded union with India which the rulers would find impossible to resist. Giving an indication of how the Congress would fight against princely independence, he advised Mountbatten to give up his idea that the States would conclude independent treaties with Britain, or that sovereignty could revert to the princes after the British withdrawal.²⁰⁸ The viceroy realized that neither he nor the British Government could come to the rescue of the princes in any legal or constitutional way. At best, and in order to escape Churchill's wrath, he finally decided to keep his Plan as ambiguous as possible on the future of the States.

When the Plan was announced, the Congress took the initiative to decide the fate of the 565 princely States as a matter of immediate urgency. Under its pressure, the viceroy was obliged to wind up the British Political Department in India, and on 5 July the new States Department, under Vallabhbhai Patel, was brought into existence to succeed it for dealing with the States. The Sardar inaugurated the department by denouncing all demands for independence of the States, and called upon the rulers to come into the Constituent Assembly without delay. 'I hope,' he declared, 'the Indian States will bear in mind that the alternative to co-operation in the general interest is anarchy and

chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin if we are unable to act together in the minimum of common tasks. Let not the future generation curse us for having had the opportunity but failed to turn it to our mutual advantage.²⁰⁹ The historic process of the integration of the princely States was thus initiated. Somehow, the princes came to feel that Patel was a less aggressive person than Nehru in his attitude towards them, and they hoped to get favourable terms from him while coming up for the accession of the States.

To remove the fears of the princes and to bring them quickly to the fold, Nehru authorized the viceroy to conduct negotiations with them by offering softer terms to begin with. Accordingly the viceroy summoned the Chamber of Princes to meet on 25 July when only twenty days were left to independence. For Patel and V.P. Menon, who was the Secretary to the States Department, it was a task of the greatest magnitude to bring hundreds of States into the Indian Union during those brief few days.

Remember [Mountbatten told the assembled princes] that the day of the transfer of power is very close at hand and, if you are prepared to come you must come before the 15th August. I have no doubt that this is in the best interests of the States, and every wise Ruler and wise Government would desire to link up with the great Dominion of India on a basis which leaves you great internal autonomy and which at the same time gets rid of your worries and cares over External Affairs, Defence and Communications.²¹⁰

One by one, some willingly and others most unhappily but helplessly, the princes lined up to join the Indian Union before 15 August. It was fear of the Congress and of their own subjects, as well as of the Government of India after independence which forced them to come in. One obstinate 'eccentric' among them, the Nawab of Junagadh, who wanted to accede to Pakistan at the last moment, failed in his attempt and fled. But the rulers of the two largest of the Indian States, Hyderabad and Kashmir, did not join the Union, and tragically enough, invited trouble for themselves and for their people in days to come. Since only a few States were linked with Pakistan geographically, it was India that got the princely States almost in entirety while Jinnah continued to hope for an independent Hyderabad coming into alliance with his State, and of the acquisition of Kashmir in the way he would like.

As the day of independence was drawing nearer, Cyril Radcliffe, as the Chairman of the Boundary Commission, was drawing his line of partition through Bengal and the Punjab. The legislative assemblies of those two provinces having voted in favour of partition, and the Sind legislative assembly and Baluchistan having decided to join Pakistan, and finally the referendum results in Sylhet and the Frontier having

gone in favour of that new state, the shape of the two emerging countries was getting clearer. But, on either side of the would-be Radcliffe lines, as well as across the proposed frontiers of India and Pakistan, dark clouds of violence began to gather, leading to the loss of an incalculable number of lives and to an unprecedented exodus of human beings. By the time when the Indian Independence Act received royal assent on 18 July 1947, the whole country was waiting for the dawn of independence, though under the shadow of partition. Grave responsibilities faced Congressmen everywhere in those hours of hope and fear.

Bengal and the Punjab were undoubtedly the two imminent battle-fields on the eve of independence, being partitioned as they were on communal lines. And, Calcutta, with its previous record of wanton killings, appeared the most vulnerable spot for the next bloodbath. For years the Muslims of that city had been told by the League leaders that Calcutta was the prospective capital of a sovereign Pakistan. And, for years, too, the League government of Bengal had taught their followers to regard Calcutta as their own. Even when the Boundary Commission was drawing the line of Partition, the League propaganda misguided the Muslims that either the city would go to East Pakistan or exist as an international zone for the benefit of all. But, when all such hopes faded away, the Calcutta Muslims found themselves at the mercy of the majority community, who, in turn, found the moment most opportune for revenge and retaliation. No Suhrawardy could save the Muslims, nor could the army be of any use in a city of that composition. 'In the event of the situation deteriorating in Calcutta,' Nehru discussed with Mountbatten, 'there will be immediate repercussions in other parts of Bengal, notably East Bengal. The tragic events that happened in Noakhali late last year followed Calcutta happenings. Calcutta thus becomes the key to the situation and has to be fully protected from the possibility of any disturbance.'²¹¹

The Punjab, too, presented signs of serious disturbances when Jinnah and the League showed no concern for the fate of the Sikhs and Hindus in West Punjab. The future rulers of Pakistan wanted in fact the removal of the non-Muslims from that part of their territory to ensure the safety and peace of the new State. The partition of the Punjab thus foreshadowed the migration of millions of people together with the death of hundreds of thousands. Mountbatten discussed the problem with Patel, Jinnah, Rajendra Prasad and Liaquat, and thought of the Indian Army as the only hope for facing the situation.

On 7 August 1947, Muhammad Ali Jinnah left Delhi for Karachi to await there the birth of Pakistan at the end of the next seven days. Exactly at that time Mahatma Gandhi was passing through the most agonizing hours of his life in West Punjab which was about to turn into

West Pakistan. Cutting short his stay in Kashmir, he was in Jammu on 4 August from where he proceeded to Rawalpindi to see the refugees in the Wah camp. He saw the minorities in West Punjab under the horror of death and devastation with 15 August in sight. At Lahore he disclosed his intention to the Congress workers that he wanted to spend the rest of his life in Pakistan — 'May be in East Bengal or West Punjab or perhaps the Frontier Province.'²¹² At that particular moment, however, his destination was East Bengal. As he declared while leaving Lahore: 'My present place is in Noakhali and I would go there even if I have to die. But as soon as I am free from Noakhali, I will come to the Punjab.'²¹³

From Lahore, Gandhi took the train to Patna, and from there on his way to Noakhali, stopped at Calcutta when that city was menacingly preparing for what might have turned into the worst tragedy in its history. 'We Muslims have as much claim upon you as the Hindus. For you yourself have said you are as much of Muslims as of Hindus', said a large deputation representing the city's Muslims while appealing to the Mahatma to stay on in Calcutta. To them, Gandhi was their only saviour from death, and they, on their part, stood guarantee for the safety of the Hindu minority in Noakhali which was then getting ready for serious communal riots. For the peace of Bengal and of Calcutta, Gandhi thus stayed on in that city in one of its worst and most dangerous localities named Beliaghata, and under the roofs of a dilapidated and abandoned Muslim house known as Hydari Mansion, full of dirt and filth all around. There, exposed to mobs and crowds, Gandhi waited till the day of independence came and passed, performing miracle to the surprise of India and the world. By his presence and his preaching he saved Calcutta and Bengal from the great carnage that was to come with the partition when, on the other side of India, the whole of the Punjab was up in flames in a macabre dance of death.

In grateful acknowledgement of Gandhi's unique services to the cause of peace, an astonished Mountbatten wrote: 'In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the one-man boundary force!' And, on behalf of the Muslims of Calcutta, the Muslim League mouthpiece the *Morning News* paid homage to the Mahatma saying: 'He was ready to die so they might live peacefully.'²¹⁴

Freedom dawned in the country when the Father of the Nation was busy in his peace mission. In Delhi, the celebration of independence symbolized the historic significance of the event as well as of the nation's emotional feeling for the occasion. India's capital was an ocean of humanity. The breath of freedom had come at last to the people after ages of subjugation. The thunderous roars of *Bharat Mata Ki Jai!* and

Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai! broke into the sky endlessly from seething men and women everywhere.

At midnight, when 14 August ended and 15 August began, and the clock struck twelve, the President of the Constituent Assembly, Rajendra Prasad, announced the independence with the words that 'the Constituent Assembly of India has assumed power for the governance of India'. 'When the world sleeps,' said Jawarharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister of independent India at that hour of midnight, 'India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.'

So ended at last the most momentous phase in the history of the Indian National Congress as an organization of the people for the liberation of the country. Led by unique personalities and with the noblest of principles, representing the aspiration of the nation and supported by the masses, the Congress finally won victory against the world's mightiest imperial power. In its long march to freedom, full of service, suffering and sacrifice, the Congress was a beacon light not only to the people of India but to struggling humanity everywhere. Its success, at long last, heralded the dawn of a new age for many peoples of Asia and Africa.

On that day, 15 August 1947, history began anew for the Congress, 'the history we shall live and act, and the others will write about' — thus did Nehru express his hope and vision.²¹⁵

The future beckons to us [he said]. Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and the workers of India. To fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease. To build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions, which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.²¹⁶

Abbreviations used in Notes

(Details of Sources shown in Bibliography)

AICC	All-India Congress Committee
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
CWC	Congress Working Committee
DH	Documented History of Indian Political Events 1942-3, Ed. Devdas Gandhi
ENC. INC	Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress

HC	House of Commons
INC	Indian National Congress
IOL	India Office Library and Records (London)
LC	Library of Congress (Washington, DC)
LIN	Lord Linlithgow in India 1936-1943 (The Viceroy at Bay)
MAHATMA	<i>Mahatma</i> : Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, D.G. Tendulkar
MB	Mountbatten Papers (As abbreviated on Files of Broadland Archives)
MG	Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, Pyarelal
PP	Parliamentary Papers
R-C	Roosevelt and Churchill: Secret Wartime Correspondence
RCH	Readings in the Constitutional History of India 1757-1947, ed. S.V. Desika Char
SCB	Speeches and Letters of Subhas Chandra Bose, ed. Ganpat Rai
SS	Secretary of State for India
SWJ	Speeches and Writings of Jinnah, ed. Jamil-ud-din Ahmad
SWJN	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
TP	Transfer of Power Volumes 1942-7
WVJ	Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal

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Chapter I

The Act of 1935 Impact on National Politics

V.A. Narain

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1935, proved to be a landmark in the history of national politics because of its far-reaching impact. In spite of complications and hesitations it marked a point of no-return in constitutional development, unlike the Montford reforms. The latter had left the ultimate goal hazy and, with the provision for periodic inquiry, the next step uncertain. From dyarchy to provincial autonomy, was a decisive step, but challenging tasks were ahead. For Britain, the Act represented a new consensus. The Conservatives had realized that the national movement in India was not only a reality, but a paramount reality. Terms must be made with it, and the movement allowed to move along its own lines, rather than put up futile barriers to be swept away, one by one, by an ever-rising nationalist flood. However, the hotch-potch of authoritarianism and responsible government envisaged under the Act fell far short of Indian national aspirations. The scheme was denounced as thoroughly rotten, fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable. It is necessary to examine the attitude of the Indian National Congress towards the British approach in formulating the Act of 1935.

With the signing of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact on 5 March 1931, the Civil Disobedience Movement was suspended and Gandhi agreed to participate in the Second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Indian National Congress. The conference opened on 7 September and the British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, closed the session on 11 December 1931. Gandhi returned to India by the end of the year and, as he himself admitted, he returned empty-handed. In the meanwhile Lord Willingdon had replaced Lord Irwin as the Governor-General and the Viceroy of India. The British attitude to the Congress had stiffened so much that the viceroy even refused to grant an interview to Gandhi. Civil disobedience was revived throughout the country from 3 January 1932.

While the country again plunged into the grim struggle, involving

untold miseries and unprecedented sufferings, the British pursued their scheme for constitutional development in India in right earnest. The third and last session of the Round Table Conference was held in London from 17 November to 24 December 1932. Both the Indian National Congress and the British Labour Party abstained from participation. However, the decisions taken by His Majesty's Government in the light of the recommendations of the Round Table Conferences were published in a White Paper in March 1933. The proposals embodied in the White Paper were referred to a Joint Select Committee of both the Houses of the British Parliament which took a long eighteen months to submit its report in November 1934.

The White Paper and the Joint Select Committee Report were bitterly criticized in India. The Congress Working Committee resolved in June 1934 that the White Paper did not express the will of the people of India and fell far short of the Congress goal.¹ Rajendra Prasad, in his presidential address at the annual session of the Congress in October 1934, vehemently criticized the White Paper proposals. A resolution of the Working Committee, passed at Patna in December 1934, characterized the scheme as designed to 'facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of this country by an alien people', and asked the country to reject it outright. It was pointed out that the proposals made in the Joint Select Committee Report were in several respects even worse than those contained in the White Paper.² The protracted discussions missed the substance of the whole problem, namely Indian independence. Naturally, almost all sections of public opinion in India condemned the retrograde recommendations of the Report. In the annual session of the National Liberal Federation held at Poona in December 1934, Pandit Hriday Nath Kunzru observed that in fighting against it, 'we would be fighting for our life'.³ The Muslim League also condemned the Report.

In the meanwhile the Congress had formally terminated the Civil Disobedience Movement with effect from 20 May 1934. With the blessings of Gandhi, Dr Ansari and others revived the Swaraj Party and decided to contest the elections to the fifth Legislative Assembly of India to be held in the winter of 1934. In the existing circumstances, when the mass movement was on the decline, the AICC conceded that entry into the legislature was necessary to achieve the goal. Dr Ansari, then President of the Congress Parliamentary Board, declared that every vote cast for a Congress candidate would be cast for India's freedom. Rajendra Prasad also appealed to the voters to elect Congress candidates. The Congress emerged as the largest single party in the Assembly with 44 seats. The strength of other parties was as follows: 11 Congress Nationalists, 22 Independents (of whom all but 3 were Muslims), 11 Europeans, 26 officials, and 13 nominated members. The Liberals were

virtually eliminated. It was obvious that the Congress had retained the confidence of the electorate, but to defeat the government measures, it required the help of the Muslim members headed by M.A. Jinnah, who was very much conscious of his crucial value and played his cards decisively to strengthen his position.

The Congress Party was led by Bhulabhai Desai with Govind Ballabh Pant as the Deputy Leader. S. Satyamurti and Nilakantha Das were two secretaries of the Parliamentary Party, while Asaf Ali was the chief whip. The Congress Party utilized the opportunity to criticize the Report of the Joint Select Committee (JSC) vehemently when the matter was brought to the Assembly on 4 February 1935 for consideration. The amendment moved by Desai, the Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, had two parts. First, it characterized the scheme adumbrated in the JSC Report as 'conceived in a spirit of Imperialist domination and economic exploitation' without any intention to transfer 'real power to the people of India'. Therefore, the party categorically recommended that any legislation based on that scheme should be postponed. In the prevailing mood of the country, such an amendment was in the right nationalist spirit. The other part of the amendment dealt with the controversial Communal Award. Jinnah brought forward his own amendment in which he criticized the scheme of provincial autonomy provided in the Report as 'most unsatisfactory and disappointing' and at the same time characterized the scheme of federation as 'fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable to the people of British India'. The debate continued for three days. The Congress members, like Pant and Satyamurti, bitterly attacked the proposed constitutional scheme. The first part of Desai's amendment was first put to vote as it had asked the government not to proceed with any legislation on that basis. As Jinnah and his Muslim Independents voted against the motion, the amendment was declared lost by 72 votes to 61.⁴

Outside the legislature the Congress organized an All-India Protest Day against the JPC Report. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian National Congress, declared: 'There being a general demand that a day should be fixed as a day of protest against the JPC's Report on Indian constitutional reforms, I fix Thursday, February 7, for such demonstration.' He appealed to all to participate in the country-wide protest against the scheme. Even a common resolution to be adopted in the public meetings was suggested by the president. It was as follows:

The public meeting of citizens of _____ condemns the proposed constitutional changes as conceived in a spirit of imperialist domination and economic exploitation and disclosing no intention of transferring real power to the people of India. This places on record its considered opinion that it prefers to continue the struggle for Swaraj under present constitution and

calls upon the popular representatives in the legislatures to reject the proposed scheme.⁵

Such a resolution was adopted in a large number of public meetings throughout the country. In many places all political parties combined to give expression to their utter dissatisfaction over the Report. A demonstration was held even in distant Rangoon under the auspices of the Burma PCC. That the people of both countries came together on a common platform to pass resolutions rejecting the Report was highly significant.

His Majesty's Government, ignoring public opinion in India, introduced the Government of India Bill, based on the JSC Report, in Parliament on 1 February 1935. It was adopted. The new constitution received royal assent on 2 August and came to be known as the Government of India Act, 1935.

1. Main Provisions of the Act of 1935

The Government of India Act, 1935 is a long document that runs into 478 clauses with 16 schedules. Two main provisions of the Act were the creation of the Federation of India and the introduction of provincial autonomy. To understand the Congress reaction to these provisions, it is imperative to discuss them in some detail.

In Part II of the Act, comprising sections 5 to 45, elaborate provisions were made for the establishment of the Federation of India and accession of Indian States, the federal executive and the federal legislature, etc. Two separate processes were involved in the formation of the Indian Federation — one in the case of British India and another in the case of the Indian States. Both the Governor's Provinces and the Chief Commissioners' Provinces were required to join the federation automatically. The Indian States, however, were given the option to choose whether they would join the federation or not. According to the Act of 1935, each State was to enter the federation by means of an Instrument of Accession, executed by the ruler for himself, his heirs and successors. The accession of a State was complete only when its Instrument of Accession was accepted by His Majesty. The Instrument of Accession, once accepted, could not be revoked thereafter and thus the ruler of a State who once entered the federation could not secede from it. The Federation of India was to be a perpetual and indissoluble union of the States and the Provinces.⁶

The federation would come into existence by the issue of a Proclamation by His Majesty if an address to that effect had been presented by both the Houses of Parliament. However, the important condition was that the federation could not be inaugurated until the rulers of States representing not less than half the aggregate population of Indian States

and entitled to not less than half the seats allotted to the States in the federal upper chamber had acceded to the federation.⁷ This, in practice would mean that the Federation of India would not materialize unless a sufficient number of Indian States agreed to sign the Instrument of Accession to it.

The Act shifted dyarchy from the provinces to the centre, under which important departments like defence and external affairs were to be administered by the governor-general with the advice of his councilors not responsible to the federal legislature. The other departments were to be administered by him with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, who were required to be members of the federal legislature and responsible to it.

The fundamental feature of the federal system envisaged was the division of power between the central and provincial governments, so that each could be fully competent in the exercise of its powers within its jurisdiction. This raised a controversy among some sections of Indian opinion. The Muslims wanted to secure as large a measure of autonomy as possible for the provinces. It was demanded that, as in the case of the USA and the Commonwealth of Australia, the residual powers should be vested in the provinces. On the other hand, the Liberals and others who were keen to preserve the unity of India declared emphatically that the residual powers should be vested in the centre, as in the case of the Dominion of Canada. They were under the apprehension that a government which possessed residual powers was stronger than one whose powers were specifically enumerated.⁸

The Act, therefore, made an elaborate enumeration of subjects in three lists: the Federal List, the Provincial List, and the Concurrent List. The important subjects in the Federal List included His Majesty's naval, military and air force works, external affairs, currency, coinage and legal tender, public debt of federation, posts, telegraphs, telephones, wireless broadcasting etc., federal public services, federal property, universities of all India importance, the Survey of India, ancient and historical monuments, census and statistics, import and export, federal railways and the regulation of all other railways, maritime, shipping and navigation, copyright, inventions and trademarks, arms and ammunition, explosives, opium, petroleum, trading corporations, insurance, banking, custom duties, and salt. The Indian States had also to accept these as federal subjects.

The important subjects in the Provincial List included public order, police and justice, courts, public debt of the provinces, provincial public services, public works, land acquisitions, local self-government, public health and sanitation, education, communications, water supplies, irrigation and canals, land revenue, agriculture, land tenures, forests,

mines, fisheries, trade and commerce within the province, development of industries in the province, employment and poor relief, co-operative societies, charitable institutions and religious endowments, and stamp duty.

The Concurrent List was divided into two parts. The first part included criminal law, criminal and civil procedure, evidence and oaths, marriage and divorce, registration of deeds and documents, trusts and trustees, contracts, arbitrations, newspapers, books and printing presses, prevention of cruelty to animals, and criminal tribes.

The second part of the list comprised subjects such as factories, welfare of labour, invalid and old age pensions, unemployment insurance, trade unions, industrial and labour disputes, electricity, shipping and navigation on inland waterways.

The method of exhaustively enumerating the three lists of subjects no doubt reduced the residual powers to negligible proportions, but they could not be eliminated altogether. Socio-economic and scientific innovations could lead to new subjects arising. The Act was required to make provisions to meet such unforeseen contingencies.⁹ The Act empowered the governor-general, acting in his discretion, to allocate to the centre or to the provinces, as he would think fit, the right to legislate on any matter not enumerated in the three lists, i.e., a matter which was really 'residual'. On such occasions, he could also take advisory opinion from the federal court.

The federal legislature was given extraordinary powers, under certain circumstances, to invade the provincial sphere and to make laws on any of the subjects enumerated in the provincial list. In times of emergency due to 'external threat or internal disturbance, the governor-general could exercise such extraordinary powers. No bill or amendment could be introduced or moved without his previous sanction. The provincial legislatures, of course, were not debarred from legislating on any subject within their own sphere during an emergency. But in case of any conflict between a federal law and a provincial law, the former would prevail. The laws enacted by the federal legislature during the emergency would cease to have effect on the expiry of a period of six months after the proclamation had ceased to operate.¹⁰

The legislative authority of the federation was vested in His Majesty, represented by the governor-general and two chambers to be known respectively as the Council of State and the House of Assembly. The federal legislature possessed a smaller range of power in relation to the Indian States because it could make laws for a State only with respect to the matters which that State had accepted as federal subjects in the Instrument of Accession.

The Council of State was a permanent body, not subject to dissolu-

tion. Its members were elected for a period of nine years and one-third of them retired once in every three years. The Federal Assembly would continue normally for a period of five years but could be dissolved earlier. Both the chambers had to meet at least once a year.

The governor-general, in his discretion, could summon either chamber or both of them together. He could send messages on either the bills pending, or on other matters. Every minister, councillor or the advocate-general had the right to speak, to take part in the proceedings of either chamber, but had no right to vote unless he was otherwise a member.

The Council of State was to consist of not more than 260 members of whom 156 were to represent British India and 104 the Indian States. The British Indian members were to be elected on a communal basis as follows: Hindus — 75, Scheduled Castes — 6, Sikhs — 4, Muslims — 49, Anglo-Indian — 1, Europeans — 7, Indian Christians — 2. Of the rest, 6 were reserved for women, and 6 seats were to be filled by the governor-general in his discretion, so as to redress any inequalities of representation resulting from election and in particular to secure adequate representation of the Scheduled Castes and women. The territorial distribution of seats among the different provinces was based on a variety of factors including population, historical position, and commercial or communal importance. Thus, Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces were given 20 seats each; Bombay, Punjab and Bihar 16 seats each; the Central Provinces and Berar 8; Assam, the NWFP, Orissa and Sind 5 each; and British Baluchistan, Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara and Coorg 1 each.

The seats allotted to the States were distributed among them either individually or in groups on the basis of their relative rank and importance as indicated by their dynastic salutes and other factors. Hyderabad was given five seats, followed by Mysore with three seats, and then Udaipur, Patiala, Bikaner, Kalat with two seats each. Other States or groups of States were given one seat each. The representatives of the States were to be nominated by their respective rulers.

The House of Assembly or the Federal Assembly was to have 375 seats of which 250 were to represent British India, and not more than 125 the Indian States. In British India, the Assembly seats were distributed on the principle of communal, class and special interests as in the case of the Council of State. The Muhammadans were given 82 seats, Sikhs 6, Anglo-Indians 4, Europeans and Indian Christians 8 each, landholders 7, commerce and industry 11, labour 10, women 9 and Hindus 105, of which 19 seats were reserved for Scheduled Castes. The Hindus who constituted more than 70 per cent of the total population of British India got almost the same number of seats as the minorities who were not more than 30 per cent of the population. Thus the Act gave more than

adequate weightage to the minorities in the federal legislature. As in the case of the Council of State, the territorial distribution of seats among the different provinces was also not made strictly on the basis of population. Madras, Bengal and the United Provinces with a population of 44.2, 50.1 and 48.4 million respectively were given 37 seats each. Bombay, Punjab and Bihar with a population of 18.2, 23.6 and 32.4 million respectively were given 30 seats each, while the CP and Berar with 15.5 million was given 15 seats, Assam with 8.2 million 10 seats, Orissa, Sind and the NWFP with 8.2, 3.9 and 2.4 million respectively were given 5 seats each, Delhi with 6 million was given 2 seats and Ajmer-Merwara, British Baluchistan and Coorg with 6.5 and 2 million respectively were given 1 seat each.

The seats allotted to the Indian States were distributed among them roughly on a population basis, but in such a way as to reduce slightly the number of seats available to the most populous States so as to secure separate representation for as many States as possible. Hyderabad was given 16 seats to be followed by Mysore with 7 seats and so on.

It is obvious that the composition of the federal legislature was highly undemocratic. Even though Indian States had only 24 per cent of the population of India, their autocratic rulers had secured representation to the extent of 40 per cent in the Council of State and 33.5 per cent in the Federal Assembly. The Muslims who formed only 26 per cent of the population of British India demanded and secured 33.5 per cent representation in each of the two chambers. Such provisions, no doubt, were greatly detrimental to the concept of a united India.

The Act also provided for a Federal Court consisting of one Chief Justice and six puisne judges. The court was to sit at Delhi and was empowered to exercise both original, appellate and advisory jurisdictions. It had original jurisdiction in disputes between the federal government and the provincial governments, whereas the appellate jurisdiction extended to hearing of appeals from the high courts. The Federal Court was also to adjudicate the Constitution Act, with provisions for appeal to the Privy Council. The Act also provided for the creation of a Federal Railway Authority and a Federal Reserve Bank.

The Council of the Secretary of State for India was to be abolished and its place taken by a body of 'Advisers' not less than 3 and not more than 6 in number. At least half of them must have held office in India for not less than ten years and should not have left India for more than two years at the time of their appointment. They were to be appointed for a period of five years without being eligible for reappointment. The Secretary of State for India continued to be responsible to parliament for the conduct of the governor-general and the governors in respect of all

matters that were not transferred to popular control. He and his staff were paid, as before, out of the grants provided by parliament.

Provincial autonomy was another important feature of the Government of India Act, 1935. The provinces were endowed, for the first time, with a legal personality. Dyarchy, provided in the Act of 1919, was abolished, and all the provincial subjects were transferred to popular control. Burma was separated from India and two new provinces, Orissa and Sind, were created, thus taking the total number of governor's provinces to eleven. In the provinces administered by chief commissioners, however, no provincial autonomy was provided.

The executive authority of the provinces was vested in His Majesty and was exercised on his behalf by a governor appointed by him. The governor was provided with a Council of Ministers to aid and advise him. Certain 'special responsibilities' were, however, laid upon the governors in respect of the protection of the legitimate interests of minorities, etc. and adequate powers, legislative and administrative, were vested in them for their discharge. They could also act in their discretion or exercise individual judgement. In case of doubt whether any matter was or was not a matter where a governor could use his discretion or judgement, his decision was final and could not be challenged in a court of law.

There was no limit on the number of ministers which could be appointed. They were to be chosen and sworn in as members of the Council of Ministers by the governor and would hold office at his pleasure. The governor would also preside over meetings of the Council of Ministers. A minister who, for a period of six consecutive months, was not a member of the provincial legislature would cease to be a minister at the expiry of that period.

All provincial executive action would be taken in the name of the governor, who, in consultation with his ministers, was required to make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the government. He was required to see that financial propriety was maintained by the ministers and prompt attention was paid to any representation received by his government from any ministry. Thus, responsible government was introduced in the provinces under heavy safeguards and the governors were required to play a key role in controlling the ministries and protecting imperial interests.

Bicameral legislatures were provided for Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Provinces, Bihar and Assam. The other provinces would continue to have unicameral legislatures. The legislative councils or upper chambers were not subject to dissolution, one-third of their members would retire every three years. The legislative assembly of every province would be fully elected and there was no official bloc in it as in

the case of its predecessor under the Act of 1919. Election to both the chambers was direct, but in the case of the Legislative Councils of Bengal and Bihar, about two-fifths of their members were elected by the members of the Legislative Assembly of the province concerned in accordance with the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. In the case of the legislative councils, separate representation was given only to different communities: in the legislative assemblies it was given also to different classes and interests.

The popular provincial assemblies were backed by popular electorates which were expanded, on the lines recommended by the Lothian Committee Report, to include about 30 million voters. Though a small property qualification was retained, nearly a sixth of the adult population and fourteen per cent of the total Indian population became eligible to vote. Women received the vote on the same terms as men, but the surviving property qualification restricted their numbers.

The legislative councils were highly oligarchical bodies. They represented mainly the interests of the zamindars and other higher classes and vested interests. The provincial ministries were not responsible to them. They had no power to originate money bills or to grant supplies. They were able to delay for one year but not to obstruct permanently any piece of legislation sponsored by the ministries and supported by the lower houses.

The provincial legislatures had power to make laws for the province or for any part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the provincial list and concurrent list. Every bill passed by the provincial legislature had to be presented to the governor who, in his discretion, could give or withhold his assent in His Majesty's name. He could also reserve the bill for the consideration of the governor-general. The bill could also be returned to the legislature for reconsideration in part or whole.

The annual financial statement embodying the estimated receipts and expenditures of the province was to be laid before the provincial legislature every year. Certain heads of expenditure such as salary and allowances of ministers, the advocate general, judges of the high court, expenditure for excluded areas etc., were not subject to the vote of the legislature, but, except the first, they could be discussed there. The other expenditures were submitted in the form of demands for grants to the legislative assembly. It was expressly laid down in the Act that no demand for a grant could be made except on the recommendation of the governor. The assembly had the power to assent, to refuse or to reduce the amount specified in any demand. Any demand which had been refused or reduced by the assembly could be restored by the governor if he thought that it would affect the discharge of any of his special

responsibilities. The provincial legislature could not take into consideration any bill or amendment making provision for imposing or increasing any tax, for regulating the borrowing of money or for charging any expenditure on the revenues of the province or increasing its amount unless it was recommended by the governor.

The provincial legislature had the power to make rules regulating its procedure and business. But the governor, in his discretion, after consultations with the presiding officer or officers of the legislature, could make rules regulating procedure and the conduct of business in relation to matters affecting the discharge of his functions in his discretion or individual judgement. Like the governor-general, the governor had the power to issue ordinances when the legislature was not in session. He had to exercise his individual judgement in promulgating an ordinance. Every such ordinance had to be laid before the legislature as soon as it met and lasted for only six weeks thereafter, unless disapproved earlier by legislative resolution.

The governor was given special powers in relation to 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas in the province. These areas were known as 'backward tracts' under the Act of 1919. The governor could make regulations for peace and good government of any such area. He also exercised special powers in case of failure of the constitutional machinery. If at any time the governor was satisfied that a situation had arisen in which the government of the province could not be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Act, he could, with the concurrence of the governor-general, issue a proclamation under section 93 that he had assumed all powers vested in or exercisable by any provincial body or authority other than the high court. This had to be communicated forthwith to the Secretary of State and placed by him before the two Houses of Parliament. With their approval, it could remain in force for three years.

The constitutional reforms introduced by the Act of 1935 could not resolve the major political issues confronting the country. The federal scheme was condemned on several grounds. It was rightly pointed out that it did not envisage any real transfer of power to Indians. The federal legislature was saddled with an element of conservatism in the form of the nominated representatives of the States who enjoyed a privileged position under the constitution. The representation given to them was more than was due to them on the basis of either their territories, population or the contribution they would make to the revenues of the federal government.

The division of functions into federal, provincial and concurrent lists increased chances of litigation as subjects enumerated in one list might come into conflict with subjects included in the two other lists. If a law

was passed by the federal legislature on any subject given in the concurrent list, the provincial legislature could not make a law on the same subject afterwards. As regards the residuary subjects, the governor-general was given the power to decide, at his discretion, to which of the three lists a particular matter was to be allotted.

The powers of the Indian legislatures, on the whole, were restricted and there were certain subjects on which neither the federal legislature nor the provincial legislatures could enact laws. Those matters were regarding the sovereign or the royal family or the succession to the crown and the Army and Air Force Acts, etc. The Indian legislatures also had no right to amend any of the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. The British Parliament alone could do so.

In fact, the preliminaries to the formation of a federation were absent in India. Federations commonly result from an agreement between independent or at least autonomous governments, surrendering a definite part of their sovereignty or autonomy to a new central organism. In India, the federal scheme was sought to be imposed from above, instead of by agreement among the federating units.

Provincial autonomy lost its very essence with the vast ordinance-making power and special responsibilities entrusted to the governor and the discretionary powers of the governor-general under the Act of 1935. The communal electorate started by the Act of 1909 not only continued in the Act of 1935, but was extended to other communities. The arrangement, in fact, threatened to break India into a mosaic of races and had a destabilizing effect on the unity of India.

Thus, the Act of 1935 granted little real power to the Indians. It had even scrupulously avoided the use of the words 'dominion status' anywhere in the constitution. It provided, no doubt, a gigantic constitutional facade, but there was nothing substantial within it. Nehru rightly criticized the Act of 1935 as a machine with strong brakes and no engine.¹¹

2. National Reaction to the Act

There was sharp reaction against the Act in India. The Indian National Congress levelled a bitter attack on it from different angles. In fact, except for Gandhi's participation in the Second Round Table Conference, the Congress had opposed the British move to frame a new constitution, from the appointment of the Simon Commission itself. The Indian view was summed up by Jawaharlal Nehru in February 1936 as follows:

The new Act is deliberately designed to strengthen and consolidate all the vested and reactionary elements in India — the British Government,

British financial interests, the Indian princes, big semi-feudal land lords and all others who are interested in preserving the present order. It makes even minor changes difficult and any major change almost impossible without an upheaval which will wreck the Act and all that it stands for.¹²

Nehru also pointed out that the constitution had been framed from a lawyer's point of view and the human and economic side had been forgotten. 'The feudal and autocratic rights of the princes', he said, 'were too sacred to be touched but not so the right to live of the three hundred and fifty odd millions of India.' In the presidential address to the Congress at Lucknow in April 1936, he further elaborated his views on the matter and brought certain specific charges against the provisions of the Act.

Regarding provincial autonomy, Nehru observed that the provision for second chambers in many of the provinces was a reactionary one that would be exploited by the governors to check any forward tendencies in the lower houses. The federal part of the 'unholy structure' was a most reactionary one and the Congress was prepared to fight against it to its utmost strength. Their primary object was to kill the federation as they could never admit the right of the Indian States to continue as feudal and autocratic monarchies. Nehru condemned the Indian feudatory States in the strongest terms:

They have long survived their day, propped up by an alien power, and have become the strongest anomalies in a changing world. The future has no place for autocracy or feudalism; a free India cannot tolerate the subjection of many of her children and their deprivation of human rights, nor can it ever agree to a dissection of its body and a cutting up of its limbs. If we stand for any human, political, social or economic rights for ourselves, we stand for those, identical rights for the people of the states.¹³

He was also bitter against the communal electorate provided in the Act because it sought to divide India into numerous separate compartments, chiefly on a religious basis. He was quite convinced that communalism and democracy could never go together.

On the whole, the Congress president characterized the Act as a 'new charter of slavery'. 'A charter of slavery,' he observed, 'is no law for the slave, and though we may perforce submit for a while to it and to the humiliation of ordinances and the like, inherent in that enforced submission are the right and the desire to rebel against it and to end it.' While rejecting the Act, the Congress called for the convening of a constituent assembly. Nehru was convinced that the solution of India's political and communal problems could come only through such an assembly, provided it was elected on 'an adult franchise and a mass basis'. Naturally,

the Congress decided to press this demand and keep it before the country and the world.

But the most difficult issue which the Congress faced was whether to seek election to the provincial legislatures and to accept office. On this vital question, the clash between the two wings of the Congress was most apparent. The younger rank and file, led by Nehru and Bose, adhered to the left whereas the old guard belonged to the right. The left wing leaders decided to carry on a campaign to prevent the Congress accepting office under the provisions of Act of 1935. But some right-wing leaders, like M.A. Ansari and B.C. Roy, urged in a joint statement that the Congress should not only enter the legislatures under the new constitution, but 'should occupy all places of power, initiative and vantage in its struggle for freedom'.¹⁴

The Congress Parliamentary Board discussed the issue of acceptance of office in February 1936. Almost all members were in favour of contesting the elections. Kripalani wrote to Rajendra Prasad that 'nobody could have imagined that there was such a strong opinion for accepting office', and predicted that Nehru's attitude would make the situation 'a little difficult'.¹⁵ However, Nehru continued to air his uncompromising opinions on this matter. 'It would be a fatal error', he said at Madras, 'for Congress to accept office. That inevitably would involve co-operation with British imperialism.' On the other hand, Satyamurti, a leading Madras Congressman, declared that the refusal of office would be to play the imperialist game. To Subhas Bose acceptance of office was a complete defeat and surrender. While the socialists under Jayaprakash, Acharya Narendra Dev etc. vehemently protested against the drift toward office acceptance, the right-wing leaders like Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhulabhai Desai and Rajendra Prasad stressed the need for it.¹⁶

Nehru discussed the matter in detail in his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Congress. 'To accept office and Ministry under the conditions of the Act,' he said, 'is to negate our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our co-operation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people.'¹⁷ He was convinced that the ministers under the Act would not be able to give relief to the masses. 'It is always dangerous,' he continued, 'to assume responsibility without power, even in democratic countries; it will be far worse with this undemocratic constitution, hedged in with safeguards and reserved powers and mortgaged funds, where we have to follow the rules and regulations of our opponents' making.' He warned his fellow Congressmen about the consequences of

the policy of acceptance in no uncertain terms. 'Imperialism sometimes talks of co-operation', he observed, 'but the kind of co-operation it wants is usually known as surrender, and the ministers who accept office will have to do so at the price of surrender of much that they might have stood for in public. This is a humiliating position which self-respect itself should prevent one from accepting.'¹⁸

The matter was hotly debated at the Lucknow session before a long resolution was adopted to settle the dispute. Rajendra Prasad moved the official resolution and appealed to the members to accept it. With deep conviction he said, 'Let us keep courage, and office or no office, let us go ahead. The flame of Swaraj will never be extinguished until freedom is achieved. I believe that all Congressmen, both of the pro-office and anti-office view, have the same urge for freedom. Have confidence in yourself and your country and pass the resolution of the Working Committee.'¹⁹ Many amendments were moved and a long debate took place as the Socialists were not prepared to allow the programme of council entry to be approved by the Congress. Sardar Patel pointed out that the decision had been taken by Gandhi in view of the changed atmosphere in the country. Finally, after midnight on 14 April, Sampurnananda demanded voting in which the Socialists lost by 255 to 487 and the session was adjourned at 1 a.m. The resolution began as follows:

Whereas the Government of India Act, 1935, which is based on the White Paper and the Joint Parliamentary Report and which is in many respects even worse than the proposals contained in them, in no way represents the will of the nation, is designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India and is imposed on the country to the accompaniment of widespread repression and the suppression of civil liberties, the Congress reiterates its rejection of the new constitution in its entirety.

The Congress, at the same time, demanded a Constituent Assembly in the name of the Indian people. It was further resolved that in the case of elections to the provincial legislatures, the Congress would put forward candidates on its behalf to contest such seats in accordance with the mandate of the party and in pursuance of its declared policy. The most controversial point of the acceptance or non-acceptance of office was left to be decided 'at the proper time'. The AICC was required to place a manifesto before the electorate which could be supplemented by PCCs with specific items which had special application to their respective provinces.²⁰

The All India Muslim League, in its annual session held at Bombay on 11-12 April 1936, also protested against forcing a constitution upon the people of India. However, the League considered that the provincial

scheme of the constitution should be utilized for what it was worth. As regards the federal scheme, it was clearly of the opinion that 'It is most reactionary, retrograde, injurious and fatal to the vital interests of British India vis-a-vis Indian states, and it is calculated to thwart and delay indefinitely the realization of India's most cherished goal of complete Responsible Government and is totally unacceptable.'²¹ The leaders of the National Liberal Federation, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayaker and their colleagues, criticized the limitations which the Act imposed on full self-government, but wanted that it should be given a fair trial both in the provinces and the centre. Sir Cowasji Jahangir, President of the Federation, at its meeting at Lucknow in December 1936 declared that 'given men with wide sympathies and common sense, with which the British nation has been amply endowed, and given Ministers who will not seek deadlocks, the constitution should be given a fair trial. Its success must ultimately lead to a vast expansion of powers, equal to those enjoyed by the Dominions.'²²

The acceptance of the scheme by the princes was of great importance as without their co-operation the federation could not become a reality. While the general feeling of the States was one of reluctant acceptance of the inevitable, the diehard minority opposition to the scheme of federation was as strong as ever. In case the States joined the federation, they had to sacrifice the fiscal rights enjoyed by them. Some of the rulers of the States even suggested that the federal government should not directly exercise any administrative functions in their States, but that all such functions should devolve on the State government or authorities as agents of the Government of India.²³ However, due to the wavering attitude of the States nothing concrete was decided about the federation.

At the commencement of the Round Table Conferences, Tej Bahadur Sapru had made a fervent appeal to the princes to declare their intention to join an all-India federation without any hesitation. The picture of a united India with a federal form of government was held before all. The Maharaja of Bikaner, speaking on behalf of the princes, also emphasized the geographical unity of India, despite the political division between British India and the Indian States. He felt that a federal system alone would meet the situation. 'We of the Indian States are willing', he declared, 'to take our part in and make our contribution to the greater prosperity and contentment of India as a whole. I am convinced that we can best make that contribution through a federal system of government composed of the States and British India.'²⁴ Of course, he had stressed the need for adequate safeguards, both constitutional and fiscal, for the preservation of the rights and interests of the States and their subjects. The Nawab of Bhopal had also approved of the idea and said: 'We can only federate with a self governing and federal British India.'²⁵ Thus was created the prospect of a common Indian front.

However, subsequently, such hopes were dashed to the ground. Though the Act made several concessions to the princes, they were not satisfied. In the joint conference of Indian princes and their ministers, held at Bombay on 30 October 1936 under the auspices of the Chamber of Princes under the chairmanship of the Maharaja of Dholpur, a series of objections were raised against the Act. Many of them were opposed even to the basic principles of federation. The conference of their ministers had suggested further reservations, limitations and additions to the draft 'Instruments of Accession'. It was even suggested that these documents should be called 'Treaties of Accession' and regarded as bilateral agreements, involving, on the British side, an obligation to preserve and safeguard the whole of their sovereignty and internal autonomy from any encroachment in future. Two sub-committees were formed by the joint conference to examine certain sections of the Act of 1935 and the financial implications of the federation with the Maharaja of Patiala and the Nawab of Bhopal as chairmen respectively. In view of the appointment of these two committees, the Chamber enjoined the States not to give final replies to the government.²⁶

The States' problem was further complicated by the demands of their subjects who had come under the influence of the Congress. The Indian States People's Conference held its fifth session at Karachi on 18-19 July 1936 under the presidentship of Dr P. Sitaramayya and adopted a number of resolutions on the political problems confronting them. While favouring a genuine All-India Federation, it was unable to accept the one proposed in the Government of India Act. The conference resolved to obtain recognition of the rights of the States' people to equal representation with the people of British India in the Constituent Assembly when formed and appealed to political organizations in British India to abandon the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the States and assert their right to work for the establishment of democracy and self-government therein. The attainment of responsible government by legitimate and peaceful means for States as part of a free federated India was adopted as its creed by the conference.²⁷ Eventually, vigorous *Praja Mandal* Movements took shape in many princely States throughout the country. As the requisite number of States failed to accede to the Federation of India, the scheme was still-born. However, the British authorities decided to inaugurate provincial autonomy from 1 April 1937 and steps were taken to organize elections.

3. Congress Faces the Electorate

Long before the election to the eleven provincial legislatures under the Act of 1935, the Indian National Congress drafted and adopted an elaborate election manifesto on 22 August 1936 in a meeting of the AICC held at Bombay. Once again it clarified the principle involved in

contesting the election. The purpose was to prevent the operation of forces calculated to strengthen alien domination and exploitation of the Indian people but not to co-operate in any way with the Act, rather to combat it and to end it. The Congress had rejected it in its entirety and had declared that 'no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution which curtails the sovereignty of the people of India, and does not recognise their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future, can be accepted.' The Congress offered 'the joint national front' which comprised all classes and communities, bound together by their desire to free India, end the exploitation of her people and build up a strong and prosperous and united nation. In fact, the Congress was the mouthpiece for the vast millions of Indians — the peasantry and industrial workers, the artisans, the traders, the small merchants, the middle-class intelligentsia, etc. The Congress rightly pointed out that national independence would give the power to solve economic and social problems of vast magnitude and also end the exploitation of the masses. The party was aware that the new legislatures, hedged and circumscribed by safeguards and special powers for the protection of British and other vested interests, would neither yield substantial benefits, nor solve vital problems of poverty and unemployment of the masses in the country. The Congress representatives, it was hoped, would not allow the legislatures to be used by British imperialism for its own purposes and to the disadvantage and injury of the Indian people. Rather they would attempt to take all possible steps to end the various regulations, ordinances, and Acts which were the instruments of oppression and restrained the people's struggle for freedom.

Besides these general problems, the Congress emphasized certain specific issues and included them in the election manifesto so as to place them before the people of India in order that 'they may know what it stands for and what it will try to achieve whenever it has the power to do so'. The most important issues in the general programme of the manifesto were as follows:²⁸

1. The Congress would work for the establishment of civil liberty, for the release of political prisoners and detenues, and to repair the wrongs done to the peasantry and to public institutions in the course of the national struggle.
2. The Fundamental Rights Resolution adopted at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931 which was a comprehensive programme was included in the manifesto as the Congress objective to govern its policy in the legislatures.
3. The Agrarian Resolution adopted at the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1936 was also included in the manifesto. It laid particular stress

on the fact that the most important and urgent problem of the country was the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry, fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems, and intensified in recent years by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce. The provincial Congress committees were called upon to frame a full agrarian programme for the country.

4. The problem of indebtedness required urgent consideration and formulation of schemes for (i) declaration of a moratorium, (ii) an enquiry into and scaling down of debts, and (iii) the provision for cheap credit facilities by the state. The relief should be extended to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders and petty traders.
5. The Congress stood for the removal of all sex disabilities whether legal or social or in any sphere of public activity.
6. The Congress was committed to the removal of untouchability and for the social and economic uplift of the Harijans and other Backward Classes.
7. In regard to industrial workers, the policy of the Congress was to secure to them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity as far as the economic conditions in the country permitted with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age, sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.
8. While providing encouragement to khadi and village industries, the Congress also promised to look to the larger industries, especially it assured that the rights of workers would be protected and the interests of the producers of raw materials would be safeguarded.
9. The treatment of political prisoners had long been a scandal in India. The Congress desired that every effort should be made to improve it and make it humane. It was also necessary to change the whole basis of the prison administration so that every prisoner might be treated in a humanitarian and rational manner.
10. Finally, the Congress clarified its position regarding the communal problem. The rejection in its entirety of the new Act by the Congress inevitably involved the rejection of the communal decision incorporated in it. The communal decision, the Congress declared categorically, was wholly unacceptable as being inconsistent with independence and the principles of democracy. It encouraged fissiparous and disruptive tendencies, was a barrier to national progress and struck at the root of Indian unity. The Congress disapproved it strongly and would like to end it. A satisfactory solution of the communal question could come only through the goodwill and co-operation of the principal communities concerned. It wanted to seek a common basis for an agreed solution which would help to strengthen the unity of India. The

Congress made it clear that the whole communal problem, in spite of its importance, had nothing to do with the major problems of India — poverty and widespread unemployment. The peasantry, the workers, the traders and merchants and the lower middle class of all communities were in no way touched by it and their burden remained.

With these programmes, the Congress appealed to the electorate to give every support to the party in the elections. It called upon the people of India with full hope and confidence 'to rally to the cause of the Congress, of India, of freedom'.

The Election Manifesto adopted by the AICC was endorsed at the 50th session of the Congress held at Faizpur (Maharashtra) on 27-28 December, 1936. It called upon candidates standing on its behalf to carry on their election campaign strictly on the basis of the manifesto. It was further resolved that the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office by Congress members elected would be decided by the AICC as soon after the elections as was practicable. The Congress also adopted an elaborate agrarian programme.

Jawaharlal Nehru was re-elected president of the Congress for the Faizpur session. In his presidential address, he once again emphasized the basic policy of the Congress. 'We go to the legislatures,' he said, 'not to cooperate with the apparatus of British imperialism, but to combat the Act and seek to end it, and to resist in every way British imperialism in its attempt to strengthen its hold on India and its exploitation of the Indian people.'²⁹ There was a certain tendency to compromise in order to get a majority at any cost. Nehru warned his colleagues against this dangerous drift:

The elections must be used to rally the masses to the Congress standard, to carry the message of the Congress to the millions of voters and non-voters alike, to press forward the mass struggle. The biggest majority in a legislature will be of little use to us if we have not got this mass movement behind us, and a majority built on compromises with reactionary groups or individuals will defeat the very purpose of the Congress.

Nehru once again stressed the positive demand for a constituent assembly elected under adult suffrage as that was the very cornerstone of Congress policy. The fight against federal structure adumbrated in the Act of 1935 was also in the forefront of the Congress programme.

Nehru also drew the attention of the Congress to another vital problem, namely, the desirability of affiliating with the Congress, organizations of peasants, workers and others, which also aimed at the freedom of the Indian people and thus to make 'Congress the widest possible joint front of all anti-imperialist forces in the country'. The active parti-

cipation of the organized workers and peasants in such a front, Nehru sincerely believed, would add to the strength of the Congress and therefore, must be welcomed. He also analysed the pressing problems of the workers and the peasantry of the country and shared the determination of the Congress to solve them. No doubt, challenging tasks were ahead, but Nehru was optimistic. 'We hold the keys of success in our hands,' he said, 'if we but turn them rightly. And it is the increasing realization of this that has swept away the defeatist mentality of our people.'³⁰

The Congress offered a national platform to Indians and a united front against the forces that worked for the domination and exploitation of the country. The party was required to approach over 36 million voters and contest about 1500 seats in constituencies spread over the vast country from one end to the other. For such a huge task the organization required large sums of money. Besides the expenditure for general propaganda, it was necessary to give financial help to some candidates who could not bear their expenses themselves, particularly those of the scheduled and backward classes. Therefore, an appeal was issued to the people to subscribe to the election funds of the Congress so that its message might reach each voter and the remotest corners of the country. Both Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress, and Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Parliamentary Board of the party, signed the appeal for funds and fixed the first fortnight of November 1936 for such collections.³¹

Regarding the selection of Congress candidates, a statement was issued by Nehru, Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Jamnalal Bajaj from Wardha on 17 November 1936. It laid stress on the quality of the candidates from the point of view of Congress policy which was more important than the winning of seats and the capture of a fictitious majority in the legislatures. Only such persons should be chosen as Congress candidates for election who fully supported the Congress objectives of Indian independence and pledged themselves to carry out its policy in regard to the legislatures.³²

Nehru sent a message to the Congress candidates on 7 December in which he urged them to rise over petty issues. 'You become a standard-bearer of the Congress,' he said, 'reflecting to some extent the greatness of that organisation which has come to represent the urges and desires, the hopes and fears, the failings and the strength of the Indian people.' The Congress, no doubt, fought for success, but he warned his party-men that 'even success must not be purchased by stooping or by forgetting the ideals of conduct which have cast a lustre on the Congress name and raised us out of our petty selves'.³³ He reacted sharply when he came to know that people had resigned from the Congress organization

or held out threats to resign in protest against the Parliamentary Board's nominations. 'I would want you to understand', he told his party colleagues bitterly at Faizpur on 25 December, 'that the nomination of candidates is not the distribution of sweets. . . . Elections will come and go but the Congress will remain for ever and that is why our real and great work is outside the legislatures.' If people wanted to run away from the Congress they were quite at liberty to do so, but only on the condition that 'they cannot be allowed to have the benefit of the Congress label behind their names'.³⁴

The election campaign started soon after the Lucknow Congress. Though the two wings in the Congress were divided over the issue of office acceptance, all of them plunged into the campaign and their internal conflicts vanished for the moment. All Congressmen accepted the election manifesto as their common platform in all the provinces. It stirred the countryside into a ferment such as it had never before experienced. The sense of impending change awakened the villages. A new life was visible everywhere. It was much more than an election campaign. A British governor of the United Provinces, Sir Harry Haig, remarked about the attitude of the villager that, 'He felt that the British Raj was weakening, that the Congress Raj was coming, and as so often happens, threw himself definitely on what seemed to be the winning side.'³⁵

For the Indian National Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, the president, shouldered the greatest burden of the campaign. He rushed from place to place, from the northern frontiers to the southern seas. His own account of the campaign cannot be bettered:

I was not a candidate myself, but I toured all over India on behalf of Congress candidates, and I imagine that I created some kind of record in the way of election campaigns. In the course of about four months I travelled about fifty thousand miles, using every kind of conveyance for this purpose, and often going into remote rural areas where there were no proper means of transport. I travelled by air plane, railway, automobile, motor truck, horse carriages of various kinds, bullock cart, bicycle, elephant, camel, horse, steamer, paddle-boat, canoe, and on foot. . . . On a rough estimate it can be said that ten million persons actually attended the meetings I addressed, and probably several million more were brought into some kind of touch with me during my journeying by road.³⁶

For various reasons Nehru attracted enormous crowds and evoked an astonishing amount of enthusiasm. Partly it was due to his personal popularity, but, as he thought, largely it was due to the great prestige and influence of the Congress. The election campaign gathered momentum as time rolled on and the crowds became vaster and vaster. The

most carefully made plans fell to pieces because of the pressure of innumerable human beings. A twelve-hour-a-day programme was increased to eighteen hours a day and even then it was not completed. However, Nehru showed utmost consideration for those vast gatherings of human beings full of enthusiasm and excitement and dealt with them 'fairly and squarely'. For he knew that the strength of the Congress, as he told a public meeting in Madras on 6 October 1936,

came ultimately from the millions of the Indian people. It came from you and the likes of you all over the country, peasants, workers, middle classes and others. It came from all these joining hands, working together, cooperating together, fighting and suffering together. We developed thus a great strength which terrified even a great empire. We are going to develop that strength still more till we humble that great empire.³⁷

He always emphasized and appealed for an Anti-Imperialist United Front in the fight for Indian independence. Addressing gatherings at Bombay, he said : 'The Congress represents all people and all views in the country. It can be said to be an all parties conference in permanent session. . . . It is the duty of everyone to strengthen the Congress and not seek to weaken it by adding to the difference.'

While emphasizing the need for a joint front to fight against the British raj, Nehru also drew a picture of a new social order before his countrymen. 'We have to build up a new social order,' he emphasized, 'in which everyone will have the fullest opportunity for development, no exploitation, and in which there will be not merely political democracy, but economic democracy, which means economic equality without which political democracy will be a hoax. What does it matter to one whether he has a vote or not, when he is hungry and starving?'³⁸ Speaking in the same vein to peasants and workers at Madras he said that, if Swaraj was necessary for India, it was not for those at the top and for the well-to-do people, but 'for the poor peoples, the workers and the peasants who cannot any longer do without it. The Swaraj we are working for is a Swaraj of the Indian masses, a Swaraj in which workers, all over the country will have an effective voice.' During his two-day tour of Orissa in November 1936, he visited Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar, Berhampur and a score of villages and saw 'the appalling poverty of the people of Utkal'. 'In this poverty-stricken country of ours, Utkal seems to be the greatest sufferer,' he said in his statement to the press on 12 November 1936, 'and I have seen this suffering in the sunken faces of innumerable people. . . . The Congress, I trust, will give all the help it can to our comrades in Utkal.'³⁹

In most constituencies people cast their votes for the party rather than the candidate. In fact, there were a number of illiterate voters who could

not even read a ballot paper and the government introduced coloured boxes to distinguish the political parties who took part in the election. Lord Erskine, Governor of Madras, observed: 'It is doubtful if 40 per cent of those who exercised the franchise knew the name of the candidate for whom they voted. . . . The slogan "Vote for Gandhi and the yellow box" carried all before it.'⁴⁰

4. Election Victory and After

The Congress swept the polls. Over 54 per cent of the total electorate cast their votes, and out of the total of 1,585 seats in the provincial legislative assemblies, the Congress won no less than 714. It was able to secure an absolute majority in the legislative assemblies of five provinces, namely, Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. The Congress emerged as the biggest single party in four provinces, namely, Bombay, Bengal, Assam and North-West Frontier Province. Only in the Assemblies of Sind and Punjab, was the Congress a comparatively small minority. Most striking was the victory in Madras where the Justice Party, which had remained in power in the teeth of Congress opposition since 1922, obtained only 21 seats against 159 won by the Congress. The table shows the number of seats, the percentage of votes etc. secured by the Congress:⁴¹

Congress Performance in 1937 Elections

<i>Province</i>	<i>Total No. of seats</i>	<i>Seats won by Congress</i>	<i>Percentage of seats won by Congress</i>	<i>Percentage of total votes secured by Congress</i>
1. Madras	215	159	74	65
2. Bihar	152	98	65	75
3. Bengal	250	54	22	25
4. CP	112	70	62.5	61
5. Bombay	175	86	49	56
6. UP	228	134	59	65
7. Punjab	175	18	10.5	13
8. NWFP	50	19	38	—
9. Sind	60	7	11.5	12
10. Assam	108	33	31	—
11. Orissa	60	36	60	—

The total number of Muslim seats in the legislative assemblies of the eleven provinces was 482. Out of this number, the Congress contested only 58 and won 26, whereas the Congress contested 20 out of 38 labour seats and won 18.

The Congress Working Committee took the earliest opportunity at the end of February 1937 to congratulate the nation on its success in the election. It said:

The Working Committee congratulates the nation on its wonderful response to the call of the Congress during the recent elections, demonstrating the adherence of the masses to Congress policy, and their firm determination to combat the new constitution and end it and by means of a Constituent Assembly to establish an independent and democratic State and remove the many burdens under which all sections of our people suffer.⁴²

The causes for Congress victory were many. First, the magic personality of Gandhi was a decisive factor to sway the mass of voters. After the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, Gandhi had ceased to be a member of the Congress, but by concentrating more on constructive programmes like village uplift through cottage industries and removal of untouchability etc., he was more firmly entrenched than ever in the hearts of millions of Indians, so much so that a vote for Congress meant a vote for Gandhi. The illiterate voters, as has been said earlier, identified the yellow ballot box as the Gandhi box and unhesitatingly put their ballot paper in it.

On the insistence of Gandhi, the annual session of the Congress had been held at Faizpur in December 1936 in a rural area in Maharashtra and he was bent upon making the first village session of the Congress a success. The purpose was to draw the attention of the poor villagers to the Congress programme. Though Gandhi did not take part in the political deliberations of the Congress, he was present there to open the Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition before the inauguration of the Congress session. His speech at the exhibition grounds on 27 December was significant. It was an appeal to the people of India to accept the creed of the Congress and its conception of swaraj wholeheartedly, for their total elevation. 'Let there be no mistake,' he said, 'about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other economic.' Gandhi further emphasized:

It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is dharma, that is, religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of expedience but the living Truth that pervades every thing and will survive all destruction and all transformation. The moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, that is, non-violence. Let us call this the square of swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue.⁴³

Besides Gandhi, the other stalwarts of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari and others gave inspiring leadership to the party and led it to electoral victory. Sardar Patel, who was the president of the Congress Parliamentary Board, said:

I was entrusted by the Congress with the work of organising the elections and seeing that it achieved success at the polls. Thanks to the wonderful co-operation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his inspiring lead, and the untiring efforts and willing co-operation of my colleagues, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, and Mr Bhulabhai Desai and the tremendous enthusiasm shown by the entire country, we have more than achieved our object. In the South our victory has been phenomenal. Even Christians won on the Congress ticket. This is largely due to the re-entry of that great and astute politician, Mr C. Rajagopalachari, into the Congress.⁴⁴

Besides the leadership, the party machinery was also responsible for its success in the polls. The election victories confirmed the Congress claim of being the most powerful and best organized political institution in India. The party leadership was ably supported by a large contingent of political workers and volunteers.

In a country like India, with a large pre-industrial peasant economy, slow communications and a low literacy rate, merely printing of new franchise qualifications was no guarantee at all that a significant number of the new electorate would be aware of their powers, much less use them. So the first priority of the Congress campaign-managers was to ensure that as many as possible of the voters were informed of their rights by party workers. It was accomplished by putting the canvassing machine into top gear and bands of white-capped, khaddar-clad volunteers became a marked feature of the rural landscape.

Apart from the leadership and the party machinery, it was comprehensive Congress election manifesto covering the problems of all sections of the people that attracted many. In the rural areas, the Congress leaders drew voters with their anti-zamindari stand. They were able to play their role as 'peasants' friend'. A broad agrarian programme captivated the imagination of the peasants and drew them in large numbers to the Congress fold. The party also attracted industrial workers in the towns by promising to redress their grievances. As Nehru repeatedly emphasized, the Congress was the joint national front not only for winning independence for the country, but also at the same time for the amelioration of the conditions of the millions of poverty-stricken masses of India.

The weakness of the political systems that had grown under dyarchy also helped Congress victory by making any opposition ineffective in

most provinces. One of the main features of the constitutional set-up in the 1920s had been the lack of stability of the provincial ministries. Only in two or three provinces could any sort of joint responsibility be established at all.⁴⁵ By 1936 these incipient rivalries resulted in the fragmentation of any opposition to the Congress as each ex-minister looked to his own salvation at the expense of his erstwhile colleagues. In the United Provinces, successive governors had worked hard to set up a conservative opposition party to the Congress, using the big landlords and prominent members of the business community. For instance, the National Agriculturist Party was led by two of the most important politicians of the dyarchy period, the Nawab of Chhatri and J.P. Srivastava. When the party faced the provincial elections, factions and rivalries destroyed its effectiveness. The conflict between Srivastava and Chhatri prevented the creation of any strong single leadership or organization. In the case of the Congress, in spite of local and ideological differences, the magnetic personality of Gandhi worked as a great unifying and cementing force.

The communal parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League also failed to make much impact on the electorate. In 1935 Jinnah tried to resuscitate the moribund Muslim League to fight the elections to the provincial assemblies. His tactic was to persuade autonomous provincial leaders to contest the elections on the League ticket, but he had neither programme nor any concrete political advantages to offer them. Negotiations with a number of provincial Muslim parties in the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal, Sind and the UP were started, but broke down. Of the 482 Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures, the League won only 109 seats in 1937. Hence it could not yet be said to represent the majority of Indian Muslims.

Dr K.M. Ashraf of the AICC office analyzed the Congress victory in these words:

Our decisive victories in the various provinces are almost entirely due to the overwhelming support of peasants and petty landholders on the basis of our Agrarian Programme and the Fundamental Rights incorporated in the Karachi Congress Resolution. Our victories in those parts of the country where the official repression was the most severe gives a direct lie to those who usually talk of a state of defeatism and political backwardness among the masses.

It was further observed:

In terms of political tendencies and programmes feudal reaction has been effectively overthrown, and the policy of petty rural reforms as expressed in official programmes stands thoroughly discredited. Reformism, among the Muslims, has been thoroughly exposed. This is proved by the complete

repudiation of liberalism as a creed. Communalism and social reaction in general have been discomfited except in areas where we somehow failed to emphasise the economic programme.⁴⁶

Thus, the Indian National Congress emerged as the strongest political force in the country after the elections of 1937.

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Chapter II

The First Congress Ministries: Problems and Prospects (1937-1939)

Kishori Mohan Patra

1. The Post-election Political Situation

AFTER THE VICTORY in the election to the provincial legislatures in 1937, the Indian National Congress was required to decide the important question of acceptance of office. So far, it had followed the policy of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Now it had to make a critical decision on whether it should accept the responsibility of administering the provinces where it had won a majority, or to refuse office and thus to create a constitutional deadlock. The matter was hotly debated in Congress circles. The All India Congress Committee met at Delhi on 17-18 March 1937 to take a final decision. On behalf of the Working Committee, Rajendra Prasad moved the main resolution regarding the acceptance of office by the Congress and it was seconded by Vallabhbhai Patel. Rajagopalachari, Bhulabhai Desai, Satyamurti and others spoke in favour of the resolution whereas Acharya Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan, Jayaprakash Narayan and Sarat Chandra Bose vehemently opposed the move. The Congress President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was also not in favour of acceptance of office. However, Mahatma Gandhi had persuaded the Working Committee to adopt a resolution recommending acceptance of office on certain conditions. After a prolonged debate over two days, the resolution was adopted by 78 to 135 votes. The text of the resolution clearly reveals the strategy adopted by the Congress to deal with the new political situation created by the Government of India Act, 1935, and the subsequent election to the provincial legislatures. The Congress policy had consistently been to combat the Act of 1935 and the resolution declared:

The electorate has, in overwhelming measure, set its seal on this policy and programme and the New Act therefore stands condemned and utterly rejected by the people through the self-same democratic process which had been evoked by the British Government, and the people have further declared that they desire to frame their own constitution, based on a

national independence, through the medium of a Constituent Assembly elected by adult franchise.¹

Thus the fundamental Congress policy was to combat the new constitutional manoeuvre of the British in order to expose the inherent antagonism between British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism.

The AICC authorized the acceptance of office in provinces where the Congress commanded a majority in the legislature, but a word of caution was added to the effect that the leader of the Congress Legislature Party should state publicly that the governor would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities.

After the meeting of the AICC, the Congress legislators from all provinces met in Delhi on 19-20 March 1937. The National Convention strongly condemned the Act of 1935 and categorically declared that the Indian people would not accept a constitutional structure framed by any external power. The meeting also provided the guidelines to the Congress legislators regarding the programmes and policies to be adopted by the party in the provincial assemblies. The Congress Working Committee also set up a Parliamentary Board consisting of three members, namely, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, to regulate and control the activities of the Congress ministries and party legislators in the provinces. Patel was in charge of Bombay, Madras, CP and Sind, Azad was allotted Bengal, UP, Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. The three remaining provinces, Bihar, Orissa and Assam, came under the supervision of Rajendra Prasad.

On the basis of the resolution, the Congress leaders in different provinces began negotiations with the respective governors regarding the formation of ministries. But the governors were not prepared to give the desired assurance. They explained that this was completely impracticable for constitutional reasons. The power and duty of exercising individual discretion in certain circumstances was placed on the governors by the Act itself in para 8 of the Instrument of Instructions. As the governors were not prepared to give the required assurances, the Congress leaders rejected the invitation to form the ministries in their respective provinces.

A heated public controversy soon ensued over the subject of assurances in which legal opinion in India and England began to range itself on opposite sides. Mahatma Gandhi issued a long statement analysing the deadlock on 30 March 1937. He believed in some sort of gentlemanly understanding between the governors and their Congress ministers assuring the latter that the governors would not exercise their special

powers of interference so long as ministers acted within the constitution. But the controversy lingered on for the next three months in which statements and counter-statements were issued on behalf of the Congress and the British Government.

2. Formation of Interim and Congress Ministries

Meanwhile the British authorities were determined to inaugurate the new constitutional scheme for the provinces on 1 April 1937. Serious attempts were made to find an immediate alternative and in all provinces where the Indian National Congress, as the majority party, refused to form ministries, minority ministries were sworn in. The day of the inauguration of the Act, 1 April 1937, was observed all over India by the Congress as a day of protest against 'a new charter of slavery'. Hartal was observed and mass meetings were held throughout the country. The new minority ministries faced strong public criticism from the day of their installation.

As the controversy took a legal turn, Mahatma Gandhi, on behalf of the Congress, proposed that the matter be referred to an impartial tribunal for decision. But the suggestion was promptly rejected by the British authorities. The government remained adamant. The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Allahabad, on 26-9 April 1937, reiterated its position as follows:

The past record of the British Government as well as its present attitude show that without the specific assurances as required by the Congress, popular ministers will be unable to function properly and without irritating interference. The assurances do not contemplate abrogation of the right of the governor to dismiss the ministry or dissolve the provincial assembly when serious differences of opinion arise between the governor and his ministers. But this committee has grave objection to ministers having to submit to interference by the Governor with the alternative of themselves having to resign their office instead of the governors taking the responsibility of dismissing them.²

The Working Committee also declared that the formation of the interim ministries by the governors was 'unconstitutional, repugnant to the conception of autonomy and in total defiance of the overwhelming public opinion in each of these provinces'. In fact, the position of those minority ministries was becoming more and more difficult. In spite of repeated demands from the elected members, the legislatures could not be summoned as the intention of the Congress was to pass no-confidence motions against the ministries and dislodge them. But they had to be summoned within the first six months and the budget had to be passed. So the authorities had to change their stand and Lord Linlithgow, the Governor-General, finally issued a statement on 22 June to

conciliate the Congress. Though a definite assurance in terms of the Congress resolution could not be given, it was admitted that the essence of provincial autonomy, as envisaged in the constitution, was the co-operation of the governor with his ministers. The Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha in the first week of July 1937, carefully considered the declaration of the government and resolved on 8 July that Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they might be invited to do so. 'Acceptance of office', said Jawaharlal Nehru, 'does not mean by an iota acceptance of the slave constitution. It means fight against the coming of federation by all means in our power, inside as well as outside the legislatures. We have taken a new step involving new responsibilities and some risk. But if we are true to our objectives and are ever vigilant, we shall overcome these risks and gain strength and power from this step also. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.'³

The leaders of the Congress Parliamentary Parties were invited to form ministries in the second week of July 1937. Within a few days Congress ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. Soon after, the Congress gained an absolute majority in the North-West Frontier Province and a Congress Ministry was formed there also. Thus Congress Ministries were formed in seven out of eleven provinces. Subsequently, in October 1938, a Congress-led coalition ministry also assumed charge in Assam. It may not be out of place here to give a complete list of First Congress Ministers in the country.⁴

Congress Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries

1. Bombay

- (1) B.G. Kher, Premier (Education and General)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Smt. Hansa Mehta (Education),
(ii) Gulzarilal Nanda (Labour)
- (2) K.M. Munshi (Home, Law and Order)
Parliamentary Secretary: B.S. Hire (Public Information)
- (3) A.B. Lathe (Finance)
- (4) Dr M.D. Gilder (Excise and Public Health)
- (5) Morarji R. Desai (Revenue, Rural Development and Agriculture)
Parliamentary Secretary: M.P. Patil (Revenue)
- (6) L.M. Patil (Local Self-Government and Miscellaneous)
Parliamentary Secretary: B.M. Gupta (Local Self-Government)
- (7) M.Y. Nurie (Public Works)
Parliamentary Secretary: T.R. Nesvi (Public Works)

2. Madras

- (1) C. Rajagopalachari, Premier (Public Works and Finance)
Parliamentary Secretary: A. Kaleshwar Rao (Chief Parliamentary Secretary)

- (2) Dr P. Subbaroyan (Education)
Parliamentary Secretary: C.J. Varkey
- (3) T. Prakasm (Revenue)
Parliamentary Secretary: T. Vishvanatham
- (4) V.I. Muniswami Pillai (Agriculture and Rural Development)
Parliamentary Secretary: N.S. Varadachari
- (5) K. Raman Menon (Courts and Prisons)
Parliamentary Secretary: A.K. Mohideen Maraicair
- (6) S. Ramanathan (Public Information and Administrative Report)
Parliamentary Secretary: Bapineedu
- (7) V.V. Giri (Labour)
Parliamentary Secretary: B.S. Murthy
- (8) B. Gopal Reddy (Local Administration)
Parliamentary Secretary: M. Bhaktavatsalam
- (9) Yakub Hassan (Public Works)
Parliamentary Secretary: K.R. Karantha
- (10) T.S.S. Rajan (Public Health and Religious Endowment Board)
Parliamentary Secretary: A.B. Shetty

3. United Provinces

- (1) Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier (Home, Law and Order and Finance)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Venkatesh Narain Tewari, (ii) Suleman Ansari, (iii) Mahamud Ullah Jang.
- (2) Rafi Ahmad Kidwai (Revenue, Agriculture and Jails)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Ajit Prasad Jain, (ii) Gopinath Shrivastava, (iii) Hukum Singh
- (3) Kailas Nath Katju (Development and Justice)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Jugal Kishore, (ii) Bihari Lal Chaudhuri
- (4) Smt. Vijayalakshmi Pandit (Local Self-Government & Health)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) A.G. Kher, (ii) Chandra Bhal
- (5) Pyare Lal Sharma (Education)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Husain Zaheer, (ii) Karan Singh Kane
- (6) Mohammad Ibrahim (Communication and Irrigation)
Parliamentary Secretary: Laxmi Narayan

4. Bihar

- (1) Srikrishna Sinha, Premier (Home and Revenue including Jails, Judiciary and Legislature)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Shivanandan Prasad Mandal (Judiciary and Jails), (ii) Kishna Ballabh Sahay (Revenue, Appointments and Political)

- (2) Anugraha Narayan Sinha (Finance and Local Self-Government including Public Works and Commerce)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Jagat Narayan Lal (Finance and Commerce), (ii) Jimut Bahan Sen (Public Works and Irrigation), (iii) Binodanand Jha (Local Self-Government, Medical and Public Health)
- (3) Dr Syed Mahmud (Education and Development)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Sarangdhar Singh (Education and Registration), (ii) Shri Jagjivan Ram (Development)
- (4) Jaglal Chaudhury (Excise and Public Health)
Parliamentary Secretary: Maulvi Sayeedul Haque (Excise)

5. Central Provinces

- (1) Dr N.B. Khare, Premier (Home)
- (2) R.S. Shukla (Education)
- (3) D.P. Misra (Local Self-Government)
- (4) R.M. Deshmukh (Public Works)
- (5) Y.M. Shareef (Law)
- (6) D.K. Mehta (Finance)
- (7) P.B. Gole (Revenue and Excise)

6. Orissa

- (1) Biswanath Das, Premier (Home, Finance, Education and Development)
- (2) Nityanand Kanungo (Revenue and Public Works)
- (3) Bodhram Dubey (Law, Commerce, Public Health and Local Self-Government)
Parliamentary Secretaries: (i) Jagannath Misra (Irrigation and PWD), (ii) Rajkrishna Bose (Education, Local Self-Government, Excise and Forest), (iii) Jadumani Mangraj (Finance and Publicity), (iv) Radhakrishna Biswas Roy (Law and Commerce)

7. NWFP

- (1) Dr Khan Sahib, Premier (Political, Home and Public Works)
- (2) Bhanjoram Gandhi (Finance and Legislature)
- (3) Kazi Ataullah (Education, Revenue and Agriculture)
- (4) Khan Md. Abbas Khan (Industries)

8. Assam

- (1) Gopinath Bardoloi, Premier (Home and Education)
- (2) Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad (Finance and Law)
- (3) Kamini Kumar Sen (Local Self-Government, Judicial and General Department)

- (4) Ramanath Das (Medical, Public Health, Labour and Electricity)
- (5) Akshay Kumar Das (Excise and Agriculture)
- (6) Maulvi M. Ali Haidar Khan (Public Works Department)
- (7) Rupnath Brahma (Forest and Registration)
- (8) Khan Bahadur Maulavi Mahmud Ali (Industries and Co-operation)

Certain disputes regarding the election of Congress parliamentary leaders in different provinces were brought to the notice of the Working Committee. First, there was a dispute in Bombay where a serious controversy was raised over the election of B.G. Kher. The committee heard K.F. Nariman, the other claimant, at length and discussed the matter fully. A representation signed by 40 legislators was received by the Congress president. The committee was convinced that there was no reason whatsoever to interfere with the 'free and deliberate choice' of the party legislators in Bombay. While confirming the election, it called upon all those who were in sympathy with the aims and objects of the Congress to discourage divisive activities.

The committee also considered the letter of Nilakantha Das together with the representation from some members of the Congress Party in Orissa about the election of Biswanath Das. It was decided that it was 'neither proper nor advisable' to interfere with the decision of the party. It also advised Nilakantha Das to continue as a member of the Central Assembly and not to seek election to the provincial assembly.

The most important controversy in connection with the formation of Congress ministries, which, it was said later, had serious political consequences; was the refusal of the party in the UP, under the direction of the party president, Jawaharlal Nehru, to allot two seats in the cabinet to the Muslim League. Later on, Maulana Azad wrote: 'Jawaharlal's action gave the Muslim League in the UP a new lease of life. All students of Indian politics know that it was from the UP that the League was reorganized. Mr Jinnah took full advantage of the situation and started an offensive which ultimately led to Pakistan.'⁵ In some scholarly accounts of this period, this charge is frequently repeated. However, the facts are different. The party, having won an absolute majority in the UP legislature, was not obliged under the terms of the new constitution to form a coalition government with the League. Nehru was prepared to take two members of the League into the Congress ministry provided that the League agreed to dissolve its Parliamentary Board and allow its members to become full members of the Congress Party. He believed that the acceptance of such terms would lead to the solution of India's communal problem. However, the negotiations broke down. Nehru never regretted this since he was not enthusiastic about such opportunistic, unprincipled market-place bargaining with the League.

As regards salaries and allowances of ministers, the Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha in August 1937, laid down the following general rules for the guidance of Congress Ministries:

Congress Ministers' salaries should in no event exceed Rs 500/- per month. House allowance Rs 100/- a month and motor car allowance Rs 150/- a month. Thus the total allowances for house and car should not exceed Rs 250/-.

The salaries, and allowances if necessary, of parliamentary secretaries are left to the discretion of Congress Ministers.

Regarding the Congress members in the legislatures, the Working Committee desired complete overhauling of the scale of payment of heavy daily allowances and travelling expenses. In any event travelling expenses should be charged at the rate of double third class fare. If it was desired to introduce a system of paying salaries to members, that might be done, provided that such salary did not exceed Rs 75/- a month. In addition to such salary, an allowance not exceeding Rs 2 and 8 annas a day might be given to members for the days of attendance at an assembly session or committee meeting.

The Working Committee even took steps to regulate the social intercourse of the new ministers and party legislators. Where social intercourse was merely an accident and business was the main purpose of a gathering, the function could be attended. All members of the Congress parties in the legislatures were expected, as hitherto, to avoid official functions like receptions and farewells to incoming and outgoing governors. It was required that the premiers should make it clear that no discourtesy or disrespect was intended and therefore they need not be invited on those occasions. 'It should be made absolutely clear,' the resolution said, 'that while the Ministers will aim at working in a spirit of utmost harmony with the services, they can take no part in social functions like parties or dinners. The very poverty of the land precludes their taking part in amenities of this nature. Strictly official relations should therefore be maintained throughout.'⁶ Such guidelines were more or less rigidly followed by the Congress Ministries throughout their continuance in office.

3. Goal of Congress Ministries — Gandhian Ideals and National Problems

The top Congress leaders like Nehru, Patel, Azad and Rajendra Prasad did not assume direct legislative and ministerial responsibilities, but remained outside to guide and control them. With a few other members of the Working Committee, they constituted the 'High Command' who decided policies and programmes on the basis of Gandhian ideals and

national demands. The provincial premiers were, of course, trusted Congressmen, who possessed ability and experience to work out what was possible in the prevailing circumstances. The Congress election manifesto remained in the forefront. But the main inspiration and policy, as it was said, emanated from Sevagram, the ashram in the Central Provinces near Wardha, where Gandhi stayed during the period under review.

Every issue of the *Harijan* contained a moral directive to the ministers. On the eve of their assumption of power, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* on 17 July 1937 about the personal attitude of the ministers:

Will the ministers require the western style and expenditure on the western scale? Congressmen have for the past seventeen years disciplined themselves in rigorous simplicity. The nation will expect the ministers to introduce that simplicity in the administration of their provinces. They will not be ashamed of it, they will be proud of it. We are the poorest nation on earth, many millions living in semi-starvation. Its representatives dare not live in a style and in manner out of all correspondence with their electors.⁷

In the scheme of Gandhian constructive programmes, prohibition had the top place. Gandhi believed that liquor excise, as a form of revenue, was payment by people for their own corruption, moral, mental, and physical. 'I put this prohibition in the forefront,' Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 31 July 1937, 'because its result is immediate, Congressmen and especially the women have bled for it; national prestige will rise in a manner it cannot by any single act that I can conceive, and the other five provinces are highly likely to follow the six. The Muslim non-Congress prime ministers are equally interested in seeing India sober rather than drunk.'

Next, Gandhi emphasized relief to the peasantry which was oppressed by excessive taxation, rack-renting, illegal exactions and indebtedness. The distress of the peasantry was said to be the *raison d'être* of the Congress. Another important problem to which Gandhi drew the attention of the Congress ministries was the problem of education. He attached the greatest importance to primary education and suggested certain measures to revolutionize college education. Gandhi's writings in the *Harijan* about the constructive programmes to be pursued by the Congress ministries were said to be 'Instruments of Instruction'. Gandhi admitted that whatever he wrote in the columns of *Harijan* should be taken to be purely personal to him, but hoped that his writings would appeal to the reason of those to whom they were addressed.

The Congress Working Committee twice, in their meetings at

Wardha, prepared elaborate guidelines for Congress legislators and ministries. In the first meeting on 27 February–1 March 1937, a fourteen-point programme was issued which clearly highlighted the responsibilities of the Congress members in the provincial legislatures. Besides the general policy of the Congress regarding the acceptance of office, specific instructions were as follows⁸:

- (i) Congress members of the legislatures must remember the Congress policy of not assisting or co-operating with any function or activity calculated to enhance the power or prestige of British Imperialism in India. Ceremonial, official, or social functions of this kind must therefore be avoided and no Congress member should take part in them. In doubtful cases individual members should not take any action themselves but should refer to the Congress Party in the Assembly and should abide by its decision.
- (ii) No Congress members of the legislatures may accept a title given by the British Government.
- (iii) The Congress Party in each provincial Assembly must act as a disciplined body the leaders of which will represent the Party in any conversations with the Government and other groups. Individual members shall have no official contacts with Government other than those resulting from their duties as members, and such as may be expressly authorised by the Party.
- (iv) Members will be expected to be in their places in the Assemblies during the session and when the party is attending. There should be no absence except for leave taken and cause shown.
- (v) All Congress members of the legislatures shall be dressed in khadi.
- (vi) Congress parties in the provincial Assemblies must not enter into any alliances with other groups in the Assembly without the permission of the Working Committee.
- (vii) Any member of the provincial legislatures not elected on behalf of the Congress but willing to take the Congress pledge and abide by Congress principles and discipline may be taken into the Congress Party in that legislature, if the Party consider his admission desirable. But no person against whom disciplinary action has been taken by the Congress may be accepted without the permission of the Working Committee.
- (viii) Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the Election Manifesto and the Congress agrarian resolution. In particular they should work for:

1. A substantial reduction in rent and revenue.
2. Assessment of income-tax, on a progressive scale, on agricultural incomes, subject to a prescribed minimum.
3. Fixity of tenure.
4. Relief from the burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue.
5. Repeal of all repressive laws.
6. Release of political prisoners, interneers and detenus.
7. Restoration of lands and property confiscated or sold by Government during Civil Disobedience Movements.
8. Eight hours day for industrial workers, without reduction of pay. Living wage.
9. Prohibition of intoxicating liquor and drugs.
10. Unemployment relief.
11. Reduction of high salaries, allowances, and cost of administration of Government.

(ix) Under the existing Act with all its safeguards and special powers in the hands of the Viceroy or the Governor, and its protection of the services, deadlocks are inevitable. They should not be avoided when they occur while pursuing Congress policy.

On 14 August 1937 the Working Committee chalked out the general policy to be followed by the Congress ministries. All the Congress premiers also participated in the meeting. Regarding the provinces where the Congress was not in power, the legislators were instructed to introduce bills and resolutions embodying the Congress policy and programme in order to familiarize the public with them.

Writing in the *Harijan* of 4 September 1937, Gandhi cautioned the Congress ministers to take their new assignments seriously. The offices were 'crowns of thorns, never of renown'.

A conscientious minister [Gandhi wrote], has no time for receiving addresses and honours, or for making speeches in return for fulsome or deserved praise. Nor have they time for interviewing whom they do not invite or who, they think, are not going to help them in their work. In theory, a leader of democracy holds himself at the beck and call of the public. It is but right that he should be so. But he dare not do so at the sacrifice of the duty imposed upon him by the public. The ministers will cut a sorry figure, if they do not master the work entrusted to them. . . . Their gesture of simplicity, necessary as it was as a preliminary, will avail them nothing if they will not show requisite industry, ability, integrity, impartiality and an infinite capacity for mastering the details.

Thus with high hopes and ideals, the first Congress ministries began their noble venture for amelioration of the condition of millions of

Indians and to quicken the pace at which India was moving towards the goal of complete independence.

4. Constitutional and Political Problems

(a) Resolution against the Act of 1935 and Demand for a Constituent Assembly

The first task of the Congress ministries was to pass a resolution in their respective legislatures against the Government of India Act, 1935, which had brought them to office. The resolution was as follows:

This Assembly is of the opinion that the Government of India Act, 1935, in no way represents the will of the nation and is wholly unsatisfactory, as it has been designed to perpetuate the subjection of the people of India. The Assembly demands that this should be repealed and replaced by a constitution for a free India framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult franchise which allows the people full scope for development according to their needs and desires.

The resolution was moved in the Orissa Legislative Assembly on 30 August 1937 by the premier, Biswanath Das.⁹ While introducing the resolution the premier pointed out that no outside authority had any right to frame a constitution for another nation. Because, he said, 'no constitution that was framed by an outside authority ever represented the will of the people for whom it was forged and framed.' Moreover, the 1935 constitution was highly retrograde and unsatisfactory. It divided India breadthwise into different compartments, i.e., Hindu India, Muslim India, Christian India and so on. It also divided India lengthwise, i.e., men and women. Therefore, the Premier of Orissa emphasized that 'it is designed not to unite, not to give the people of India an opportunity to come together and put up united demands, put up joint actions and joint operations on a common base, but to divide India and Indian people by religions, by occupations, by sects and sex.' He also pointed out another grave defect of the Act of 1935. That was in respect of the economic problems faced by the people of the country:

The Congress is striving today more for economic regeneration than for political, more for the food and clothing of the masses than for political privileges and rights. There are European and Indian economists who in the most emphatic terms stated that India is bled white. Readers of the Constitution framed under the Government of India Act, 1935, will see that there is not an iota which could give you an indication to show that this bleeding of Indian people could be prevented by the Act.

The shortcomings of the Act relating to the operation of the official machinery were also pointed out. It gave all sorts of protection not only to the civil service, but also to many other services. For all these reasons,

the withdrawal of the Government of India Act was demanded since it was the desire of the people to frame a new constitution in a constituent assembly elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage.¹⁰

The resolution was wholeheartedly supported by all Congress members in the assembly. But several amendments were brought forward by members of the opposition. The first was moved by a former minister in the Interim Ministry, Maulavi Mohammed Latifur Rahman, on 10 September 1937. He wanted that, at the end of the resolution, the following provision should be added, namely, 'provided that the rights and privileges of the minorities should be settled by mutual consent and agreement in the said Assembly'. Another amendment demanded more effective representation for the propertied classes. The discussion on the resolution took place on 10 September and again on 22 September 1937. The premier agreed to accept the amendment of Maulavi Latifur Rahman, but the other amendments were unacceptable. The premier repeated his argument that the Indian National Congress was determined to fight against the Act and was not prepared to wait. He wanted that the members of the Assembly should be unanimous on this important question:

We, the representatives of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, the landed aristocracy and raiyats and businessmen combine together, join together and speak in no uncertain terms that this Act should go and be replaced by an Act, a Constitution to be made by the people of India themselves on the basis of adult suffrage and through a Constituent Assembly.

The original resolution with the amendment regarding safeguards for minorities was adopted by the Orissa Legislative Assembly without any division on 22 September 1937.¹¹

In the Madras Legislative Assembly the resolution was moved by the premier, C. Rajagopalachari, on 31 August 1937. It was passed the same day. B.G. Kher, the Premier of Bombay, moved the resolution on the Constituent Assembly on 21 September 1937. He spoke at length on the defects of Government of India Act, 1935, and the need for its replacement. He explained the implications of the Constituent Assembly which would be convened on the widest franchise and appealed to all to view the question from the broad national point of view and not from a narrow or sectional one. The Legislative Assembly of Bihar discussed the issue on 31 August 1937 when the premier, Srikrishna Sinha, moved a resolution on the matter. In a speech lasting ninety minutes, he exposed the hollowness of the Act on judicial, executive and administrative grounds. On 6 September, C.P.N. Sinha, the leader of the opposition, moved an amendment seeking fair representation in the constituent assembly for minorities and backward interests. While accepting

the amendment, the premier said they had always held that separate electorates were bad as they strengthened the centrifugal forces and democracy could not be maintained in a country in which appeals were made to communal sentiments. Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Minister for Local Self-Government, moved the resolution on 2 September 1937 in the UP Assembly. As elsewhere, the Muslim League demanded safeguards for minorities. However, the premier, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, while replying to the debate on the subject on 2 October 1937, opposed all amendments, including the one proposed by the Muslim League. The latter pressed their amendment to a division, and it was rejected by the house. The original resolution was then passed the same day. The CP Legislative Assembly debated the matter on 21 September 1937 when Dr N.B. Khare, the premier, moved the official resolution. He traced at length the constitutional development of the country to show how the demand made in the resolution was a logical sequel to earlier demands. The Congress demanded that the present constitution should forthwith be repealed as inadequate and insulting to the dignity of India. The amendments to the resolution were lost by an overwhelming majority of votes and the original resolution was adopted on 22 September 1937.

Thus, in most of the provinces, a resolution condemning the Government of India Act and demanding a constituent assembly to frame a new constitution was adopted. In Bengal, a similar resolution was disallowed by the governor, while a similar resolution was passed by the legislature of Sindh.

(b) Resolution Against the Scheme of Federation

The first AICC session after the formation of Congress ministries was held in Calcutta on 29–31 October 1937. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided. It ratified the acceptance of office by the Congress in provinces where it commanded a majority in the legislatures. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad moved the Working Committee's resolution opposing the scheme of federation proposed in the Government of India Act of 1935. He said that there were two parts of the Act, namely, federation and provincial autonomy. The Congress was opposed to both, but in the interests of the country, it thought that it was necessary to capture the citadel of power. Therefore, it had accepted responsibility for the provincial governments in seven provinces. This, however, did not mean that Congress opposition to the scheme of federation and its determination to combat it had dwindled. The resolution was intended to reiterate the determination of the Congress to fight against the scheme of federation. Bhulabhai Desai seconded the resolution and several amendments were moved. M.R. Masani, while accepting the spirit of the resolution, advocated direct action, by which he meant withdrawal of provincial govern-

ments in case federation was imposed. Sri Prakasa suggested that the Congress should take action in the Central Assembly to oppose all things connected with federation, such as the establishment of a Federal Court etc. He said that unless this was done, they would not be able to combat federation effectively. N.G. Ranga wanted the AICC to lay down clearly what action was to be taken effectively to combat the federal scheme. Some amendments were withdrawn, while others were rejected. Azad assured the Congressmen that mere non-reference to direct action in the resolution did not mean that the Working Committee was opposed to the very idea of direct action. Rather it meant fully to implement the idea expressed in the resolution, namely, opposition to federation. The resolution, as adopted by the AICC, was as follows:

In view of the announcements made on behalf of the British Government that steps will be taken to inaugurate the proposed Federation, the All-India Congress Committee reiterates its emphatic condemnation of and complete opposition to the scheme and its decision to combat it in every possible way open to it. The attempt to inaugurate the scheme despite the clearly expressed will of the nation will be a challenge to the people of India. The Committee, therefore, calls on Provincial Governments and Ministers to prevent the imposition of this Federation which will do grave injury to India and tighten the hands which hold her in subjection to the Imperialist domination and reaction. The Committee is of opinion that the Provincial Governments should move their Legislatures to give formal expression to this opposition to the proposed Federation and request the British Government not to impose it on their Provinces.¹²

In the 51st annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Haripura on 19-21 February 1938, a resolution was also adopted to condemn the scheme of federation. It was firmly declared that, in the event of an attempt being made to impose it despite the declared will of the people, such an attempt must be combated in every way, and the provincial governments and ministries must refuse to co-operate with it.

In the meanwhile, the Congress ministries had started to adopt resolutions in their respective legislative chambers on this issue. On 11 January 1938, the Bombay Legislative Assembly passed a resolution, moved by the Premier B.G. Kher, by a big majority. The members of the Muslim League, Democratic Swaraj and Independent Parties supported the resolution while the Progressive Party opposed it. The UP Legislative Assembly passed a resolution opposing the federation on 20 January 1938. The Premier of Madras moved such a resolution in the assembly on 31 January 1938. He emphasized that, while India was united and one, the proposed federal unity in the Act of 1935 was 'a counterfeit one'. The resolution was carried without discussion on 1 February 1938. On 9 March the legislature of the NWFP adopted a

similar resolution. In the legislature of the Central Provinces, the resolution was adopted on 28 March 1938. In Orissa, the resolution was also moved on the same day by Nityananda Kanungo, a Congress minister, in the second session of the assembly. The resolution, which was on the lines of those adopted by the other legislatures, was as follows: 'This Assembly recommends to the Orissa Government that the opinion of this House be communicated to His Majesty's Government of Great Britain that it is politically and morally impossible for the people and government of the Province to tolerate the imposition of the scheme of the Federation as laid down in the Government of India Act, 1935.'¹³

Introducing the resolution in the house, the minister said that the unwanted constitution of which the federal portion was 'the greatest monstrosity' had been condemned by all shades of political opinion in the country. By moving such a resolution he wanted the representatives of Orissa to formally register their opinion and to express emphatically their protest against the scheme. He further pointed out that, 'millions of the States' people have been ignored, not only ignored but the theory of paramountcy is being flung on the face of the Indian Nationalism by the advocates of the Princes to stifle any growth of representative institution in those States'. He also drew the attention of the house to another very grave defect of the scheme of federation: the provision of dyarchy at the centre. 'Though we had a painful experience of dyarchy in the Provinces for the last sixteen years,' he said, 'the same is being perpetuated in the Central Legislature. . . . The fiscal policy will be beyond the control of the people and with the solid phalanx of the antiquated remnants of feudal days, the British Monarch will continue to rule over the vital points of Indian national life under the camouflage of an Indian Constitution.'¹⁴

The opposition criticized the Congress government who were occupying the ministerial *gaddi* on the ground that they had accepted one portion of the Government of India Act and wanted that the other part should be rejected. The next day, K.C. Gajapati Narayan Deo, Leader of the Opposition, spoke against the proposed resolution. He pointed out that federation was an indispensable factor of the constitution which could not be worked without it. 'With so many autonomous provinces existing in India,' he said, 'you should realise that Federation has started to exist because since their inauguration these autonomous provinces are federating with one another [under] more than one head and a Federal Court has already been instituted to settle all disputes that arise between the autonomous provinces and without Federation how can a Federal Court exist?' The political strategy of the Congress was deplored. However, the official motion was adopted without any division on 29 March 1938.

The Bihar Legislative Assembly passed a resolution opposing the federal scheme for India on 6 May 1938 couched in similar terms to those passed in other Congress provinces. C.P.N. Sinha, the Leader of the Opposition, agreed that the scheme was incapable of meeting the ambitions of Indians who should unite in opposing it.

Thus all the Congress legislatures passed resolutions against the Act of 1935 as desired by the Congress high command. They not only denounced the scheme of federation, but also were prepared not to actively oppose its inauguration.

(c) Release of Political Prisoners and Restoration of Civil Liberty

One of the first objectives listed in the Congress electoral manifesto had been the removal of all restrictions on civil liberty which the British authorities had imposed and the release of political prisoners. The seven Congress ministries took immediate steps in this connection. Orders under the existing restrictive legislation were cancelled, bans on Communist and other associations, and on political books were lifted, securities deposited by newspapers were refunded, and prosecutions stayed and withdrawn. In Bombay the special Emergency Powers Act of 1932 was repealed. In Bihar and in Orissa the Public Safety Act of 1930 was also repealed. In the North-West Frontier Province the Public Tranquillity Act of 1932 was allowed to expire at the end of its five-year life. Forfeited arms were returned and arms licenses were restored. Thus, in the sphere of civil liberties, the Congress governments clearly distinguished themselves from the non-Congress ones. Never did the press and platforms enjoy so much freedom as since the Congress took office.

The release of political prisoners took place without any difficulty in most of the provinces. But the problem lingered in two Congress provinces, UP and Bihar, and eventually it led to a political crisis. At the October 1937 AICC meeting in Calcutta, the first (as mentioned earlier) since the formation of the Congress ministries, their work naturally came up for discussion. The following resolution was adopted and referred to the Working Committee for consideration:

The AICC, while welcoming the steps taken up by Congress cabinets in the direction of the release of political prisoners and detenus, note that there are still several political prisoners in provinces where Congress cabinets exist and that in many cases steps have not yet been taken to repeal repressive laws, even those which authorise detention without trial. The AICC call for the complete implementing of the Congress Election Manifesto in this connection.

In the first week of January 1938 the Working Committee presided over by Nehru met in Bombay. The premiers of the Congress provinces

attended the meeting and the problem of the release of political prisoners was discussed. It approved of the work done by the Congress ministries in spite of difficulties inherent in the constitutional setup and urged a continuance of their efforts to implement the Congress programme.

In February 1938 there were still 15 political prisoners in jail in the UP and 23 in Bihar and some of them were on hunger strike. The governors of these two provinces wanted to verify their records before agreeing to their release to prevent 'any grave menace to the peace or tranquillity of the Province or any part thereof'. It was their 'special responsibility' and the governor-general endorsed their views on the matter under the Section 126(5) of the Act of 1935. The two governors were accordingly instructed not to yield to political pressure. But the premiers of the UP and Bihar insisted on their right to order the wholesale release of all political prisoners. When the governors refused, the two ministries resigned on 15 February 1938.

The news of the crisis came at the moment when members of the Congress Working Committee were assembled at Vithal Nagar, Haripura, on the eve of the 51st session of the Congress held on 19-21 February 1938. The Congress approved of and endorsed the action of the UP and Bihar ministries, but they were reluctant to instruct ministries in other provinces to send in their resignations by way of protest against the governor-general's action. Gandhi issued the following statement:

I have read and reread section 126(5) of the Government of India Act. It authorises interference when there is grave menace to peace and tranquillity in any part of India through any action proposed by ministers. Surely the discharge of a few prisoners, even though they were convicted of crime involving violence, for what they no doubt erringly believed to be the country's cause, so far as I could see, could not endanger peace and tranquillity. The Governor-General's interference would come properly if there was disorder consequent upon such release. . . . The action of the Governor-General bewilders me and makes me suspect whether the proposal to discharge the prisoners in question was merely the last straw and that the Congress ministers in general had fatigued the British authority. I hope that my suspicion is groundless, but, if it is so, I fail to understand the interference unless there are good grounds of which the public have no knowledge. How I wish that it was possible for the Governor-General to retrace his step and avert a crisis whose consequences nobody can foretell.¹⁵

In a message to the *Daily Herald*, Gandhi further explained that the Congress ministers throughout the seven provinces had given ample testimony of their readiness and ability to cope with the forces of disorder. The Congress stood to lose more than government if, during

its regime in any province, disorders took place. The respective ministers had in both the cases satisfied themselves with assurances from prisoners concerned of their change of mentality and acceptance of the Congress policy of non-violence. The governor-general's interference which had undoubtedly created a situation that might easily, in spite of the Congress effort to the contrary, become a real menace to India. The Congress wanted the governor-general 'to reconsider his decision so that the Governors may act constitutionally and accept the advice of their ministers in the matter of the release of the political prisoners.'

On 22 February 1938, the governor-general issued a statement to clarify the position. He pointed out that, while examination of individual cases were still proceeding, on 14 February, the premiers of Bihar and the UP demanded immediate release of political prisoners. 'To acquiesce in the immediate indiscriminate release of prisoners with records of violent crime,' he said, 'would have been to strike a blow at the root of law and order in India; dangerously threaten peace and good government; and run a grave risk to peace and tranquillity.'¹⁶ Gandhi replied from Wardha that no one had questioned the propriety of examining the cases of prisoners to be discharged, but what he had questioned was the propriety of such examination by the provincial governors in provinces said to be enjoying complete provincial autonomy. The duty and right of examination belonged solely to the responsible ministers as he understood the Government of India Act and the convention in the responsibly governed colonies. The crisis was averted after the premier of the UP interviewed the governor in Lucknow on 23-24 February and the premier of Bihar interviewed the governor in Patna on 26 February 1938. Both of them agreed to establish healthy conventions and to restore goodwill on both sides. The premiers withdrew their resignations and thus the crisis was ended. By March 1938 all prisoners were released in both the provinces.

(d) Ministerial Crisis on the Question of Temporary Leave of Absence of the Governor in Orissa

Only two months after the solution of the problem of the United Provinces and Bihar, a serious ministerial crisis occurred in Orissa and grave constitutional issues were raised in May 1938 over the question of the appointment of a temporary governor. Sir John Austin Hubback wanted to go on leave to England for a few months. He was permitted to do so and J.R. Dain, the Revenue Commissioner of Orissa, was appointed to act in his absence. The arrangement was notified on 7 March 1938, but the ministers were not consulted in this matter. The premier received the information only three days before publication of the notification. He lodged a protest against the appointment of the officiating governor on the ground that an officer serving in the machin-

ery of administration of provincial government, had been elevated to the position of a governor without the knowledge of the ministry; and, secondly, that the office of governor, which was one of prestige and authority, should have fallen on one who was an officer serving under the ministry. The situation thus created was anomalous. The ministers were required to receive orders from one who previously carried out their orders. It not only affected the position and prestige of the ministry, but also raised a constitutional issue of great importance. The matter soon assumed all-India importance. The Congress Working Committee presided over by Subhas Chandra Bose discussed the problem on 4 April 1938 and passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee have learnt with surprise that an official of the Orissa Service, subordinate to the Ministers, has been appointed to act as Governor in the absence on leave of the present incumbent. Such an appointment is highly undesirable and is in contravention of the usual convention prevailing in other countries. It is difficult for Ministers to act as Ministers to those who have been their subordinates and who might have fallen into disfavour with them. The Working Committee understands that the Orissa Ministers have lodged their protest against the appointment and expressed their strong disagreement with it. The Committee invites the Governor-General or the Secretary of State as the case may be, to revise the appointment. The Working Committee suggests the adoption of the recognised convention of appointing Chief Justices as acting Governors.¹⁷

The Congress Parliamentary Board also supported the ministry on this issue. The matter was discussed in Bombay on 29 April by Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board. It was decided to allow the ministry to resign on 5 May 1938, the day on which the temporary governor was to be installed. Gandhiji issued a statement and said: 'The whole of the sting lies in a subordinate officer becoming the acting Governor of the Province, with whom the Ministers are expected to work and almost daily submit documents for his signature and have him to preside at their meetings. It is unbecoming and reduces autonomy to a farce.'¹⁸ Many influential newspapers and constitutional authorities in England admitted the force of the ministers' contention. *The Statesman* published the following editorial comment on 7 April 1938: 'The truth seems to be that there has been an error of judgement somewhere which unfortunately is now bound in either event to cause Mr Dain embarrassment and may, if uncorrected, ultimately prejudice the successful working of Provincial Autonomy.'

Encouraged and supported by the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Parliamentary Board, Biswanath Das and his colleagues were determined to submit their resignations. On 1 May, the Congress

Legislative Party in Orissa and the Provincial Congress Working Committee also approved of the decision of the ministry to resign. The Orissa premier formally announced on that day that the Orissa Ministry had decided to resign on the acting governorship issue.¹⁹

Till the morning of 4 May 1938 the situation was dismal. The ministers and parliamentary secretaries submitted their resignation to the premier and the latter was actually on the point of leaving for the governor's residence to hand over the resignation of the ministry when at the very last moment, the governor succeeded in cutting the Gordian knot by a masterly stroke of political wisdom. He cancelled the leave granted to him in 'the interests of the Province'.

On 5 May 1938, the premier issued a statement in the assembly on the termination of the ministerial crisis. He observed that it was to the credit of the governor who, in spite of his ill health, had preferred to cancel his leave to avoid a crisis. In that connection he also spoke about his impression of J.R. Dain, the Revenue Commissioner of Orissa, who was nominated to succeed Sir John Austin Hubback. The former was an old and experienced officer of the province and the ministry had no personal grievance against him. Biswanath Das and his colleagues were congratulated for their strength and determination in resisting the pressure of the British authorities in order to safeguard constitutional propriety. Even Rabindranath Tagore sent a message congratulating the premier on his constitutional victory and rejoiced in the triumph.

5. Agrarian And Tenancy Reforms

In the Congress manifesto and election campaigns, emphasis was laid on the priority to be accorded to the solution of agrarian problems and rural indebtedness in the country so that swaraj would mean 'Swaraj of the masses, not of the classes'. Many Congress leaders vehemently criticized the zamindari system and were personally in favour of its abolition. The election manifesto had stated:

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme, the Congress . . . stands for a reform of the system of land-tenure and revenue and rent, and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue. The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an inquiry into and scaling down of debts, and the provision of cheap credit facilities by the State.

Thus, the Congress Governments were bound to tackle the major agrarian problems by tenancy reforms, reforms of money-lending systems

etc. for the benefit of millions of poor peasants of the country. A brief survey of their works is given below.

(a) *Tenancy Reforms*

In Bihar, a number of acts were passed to mitigate the distress of the peasants. They were; (i) The Bihar Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1937, (ii) The Chhota Nagpur Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1938; (iii) The Bihar Restoration of Bakasht Lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act, 1938, (iv) The Champaran Agrarian (Amendment) Act, 1938, and (v) The Bihar Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1938.

The new tenancy laws in Bihar, it was claimed, were in some respects in advance of the tenancy laws enacted in other provinces in India. It was intended to give relief to the raiyats by several measures. First, all enhancements of rents between January 1911 and December 1936 were cancelled. Secondly, all rents commuted between January 1911 and December 1936 were reduced in the same proportion in which the prices had gone down. Thirdly, it was provided that there would be total or partial remission of rent in cases where the soil had deteriorated by deposit of sand or submersion under water or by other specific cause or where the landlord had neglected the irrigation arrangements which he was bound to maintain. Fourthly, the rent was also reduced where there had been a fall in the average local prices of staple food crops during the currency of the existing rent. Finally, provision was also made for the settlement of fair rent in other suitable cases. Rents so settled or reduced in any of the above ways would not be liable to enhancement for 15 years.

Elaborate provisions were made to liberalize the transfer of occupancy holdings or parts thereof by the tenants. Any such transfer which did not have the consent of the landlord was not binding on him. By the amendments of the tenancy laws, the Congress Government completely changed the old system and permitted unrestricted right of transfer of occupancy holdings. No *salami* or landlord fee need now be paid by a transferee to get his transfer recognized. The landlord was bound to mutate the transferee's name in his papers if only the transferee paid a nominal registration fee which, in the case of a transfer, had been fixed at two per cent of his annual rent of the holding and, in the case of an exchange, at a sum of Rs 2 only, payable by each of the parties to the exchange. The law also applied to transfers made before the commencement of the new Act but not yet recognized by the landlord concerned. In such cases the transferee was required to give a notice to the landlord through the collector and to pay the required fees. In case of transfers made before 1923, even such notice or registration fee was not necessary. It had been further provided that all proceedings for realization of *salami* pending under the old law on the date on which the new Act

came into force should lapse. So long as the transferee chose to remain joint with the transferor, the landlord could not compel him to pay any fee whatsoever. When the transferee wanted to pay rent separately for his share of the holding, he was required to pay a rent distribution fee of four per cent of the value of the portion transferred to him. As soon as the fee was paid, the landlord was bound to recognize any distribution of rent made between the transferee and his transferor. If the landlord or his authorized agent refused to accept the fee, the transferee was given the right to deposit the amount with the collector who would give notice of the distribution fee to the landlord.

Another important reform introduced by the Congress government was regarding the under-tenants who had no right to acquire occupancy rights in their *rayati* holdings. The new law enabled them to acquire occupancy rights if they had cultivated the land for 12 years as under-tenants. At the same time those under-tenants were also entitled to enjoy the produce of trees etc. in their cultivated holdings. They could also be allowed succession to and eviction from their lands.

The landlord's power to realize rents was so greatly curtailed that he now had less rights than any other kind of creditor for exacting what was due to him. He was precluded from obtaining the arrest or imprisonment of a tenant for default or from having his movable property sold without his consent. At the same time the tenant's entire holding could not be sold in execution of a decree unless he was declared by a competent court to be an habitual defaulter. The tenants could no longer be ejected from their holdings for non-payment of rent or for any other reason except that they had rendered the land unfit for cultivation.

In 1929 many *rayats* were unable to pay the rents of their holdings due to economic depression as a result of which numerous holdings were sold in execution of decrees for arrears of rent and were purchased by the landlords. For the relief of such unfortunate tenants, special legislation was passed by the Congress ministry in Bihar. It was the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht Lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act, 1938. Lands which had been sold in execution of decrees for the payment of arrears between 1929 and 1937 were to be restored to its previous tenants if they paid half the amount for which the land had been put up for sale. Special tenancy legislations in the shape of the Champaran Agrarian (Amendment) Act and the Chotanagpur Tenancy (Amendment) Act had also been passed with a view to mitigating the distress of the local areas.

In the UP, the tenancy problem was treated in one comprehensive Act passed in October 1939 by the labours of the Congress government spread over a period of two years. During the different stages of consideration in the assembly, nearly 3,000 amendments were tabled, of which

850 were actually moved and 370 were accepted. The Act was hailed as the 'Magna Carta of the Tenants'. Its main objectives were to provide for better security of tenure, for the fixation of rents by government agency and for the abolition of a number of abuses or vexatious restrictions on tenants.

The most important provisions of the UP Act XVII of 1939 are outlined below.

First, the important provision of the Act was to unify the tenancy rights which widely differed in the Agra and Oudh regions of the province. More than half of the tenants' land in Agra was held with an hereditary occupancy right acquired by twelve years' possession only, whereas in Oudh only a small area was thus protected and most tenants could count a statutory tenure of only seven years. The new Act of 1939 safeguarded the position of the tenantry to a great extent. It gave all statutory tenants, in Oudh as well as in Agra, full hereditary rights in their holdings.

Secondly, landlords could prevent the growth of occupancy or statutory rights by cultivating land for 12 years after which it was classed as *sir* and in such lands tenants could acquire no rights whatever. The new Act of 1939 cancelled this system. It allowed exceptions in the case of the smaller landholders who needed land for their own cultivation. By the Acts of 1921 and 1926 landlords could acquire tenants' land for many purposes, including setting up large farms, subject to orders of a court. This provision was being used to deny the hereditary rights or to oppress tenants. By the new Act of 1939 the acquisition of landed property was limited to not more than five acres for a house, garden or grove and, at the same time, the scale of compensation was increased. The tenant was given the right to construct on his holding a residential house or any other building serving an agricultural purpose without the permission of the landlord. He was also given an unrestricted right to plant trees on his holding.

The rents of hereditary tenants were to be determined periodically by special officers and the tenant was entitled to pay at the same rate for ten years. In the fixation of rents, the government now introduced the principle that it should not exceed one-fifth of the value of the produce and the cost of production was to be taken into consideration. Both landlords and tenants in Oudh were given the right to claim that rents paid in kind should be commuted into cash. Thus the system prevalent in Agra was now extended to the whole of the United Provinces.

The Act also provided for certain privileges to the tenants which they did not enjoy before the Congress regime. A tenant was no longer to be liable to arrest or imprisonment for failure to pay his rent. If, in execution of a decree for arrears, ejectment was ordered, it could extend only

to an area of which the rent did not exceed one-sixth of the arrears decreed. All receipts for rent must be on a printed form sold by the government and the landlord was liable to pay fine, or even to court imprisonment, for habitual neglect to give receipts.

The Congress Ministry in Orissa introduced the Orissa Tenancy (Amendment) Bill, 1937, in the first session of the Assembly on 25 September 1937. The Bill aimed at:

- (i) abolition of the mutation fee, i.e. free transfer of occupancy holdings;
- (ii) giving tenants the right to cut trees standing on their holdings;
- (iii) reducing interests from 12½ per cent to 6 per cent on arrear rents; and
- (iv) finally, restraining all illegal levies on tenants.

The bill was referred to a select committee for careful consideration.

The zamindars of North Orissa, who were going to be affected by the bill, tried to persuade the Congress ministry to bring about a compromise between them and the tenants. On the other hand, in order to strengthen the hands of the ministry for initiating radical tenancy reforms, the Utkal Kisan Sangha organized a mass rally at Cuttack on 1 September 1937. It was attended by twelve thousand cultivators from different parts of the province. On behalf of the Orissa Zamindars' Association, Braja Sundar Das sent a wire to Gandhiji complaining that much injustice was being done to them. He also suggested that Gopabandhu Chowdhury, a prominent member of the Gandhi Seva Sangha, should be asked to mediate in this matter. However, Gandhiji replied that the zamindars of Orissa should place their grievances before the Premier of Orissa. The representatives of the zamindars met the ministers, but no amicable settlement was possible. They alleged that 'the Bill smells of Leninism all through. It is expropriatory in almost all its clauses.' But the premier was surprised to note that the opposition could draw comparisons with Russia in describing the revolutionary character of the bill:

It is an irony of fate [he said] that when surging waves of nationalism in countries other than ours have been shaking empires, have been throwing aside vested interests, have been throwing away autocracy in other parts of the World, in this unfortunate country of ours expropriation and revolution have been the cry for granting a little concession to raiyats which may touch land-holders' income by about five per cent.

He warned the zamindars that unless these small things were done, their existence as a class would be threatened. He said: 'The people have got the political power. How long could you go on enjoying advantages that were conferred by a Government which had nothing to do with

popular feeling and sentiment and much less with their economic life and existence.²⁰

On 3 May 1938, the Assembly passed the bill after the third and final reading. Even on that day, the representative of the zamindars opposed the motion in vehement and bitter terms. He said that the legislation was confiscatory with a vengeance and betrayed the corrupting influence of power. He further alleged:

The Congress Government, supposed to be progressive in ideas, are attacking our system on the strength of worn out theories. . . . The Government, it seems are bent on creating a class of Russian Kulaks, enlarging their holdings by renting land, often joining with farming a little trading and a persistent money-lending, developing their farms with the employment of low-paid wage labourers. History will work out its own nemesis and it is a pity that the Congress Government will play the chief role in the drama.²¹

The Congress Party was even accused as 'a band of robbers' depriving a small number of wayfarers of their property. But the Revenue Minister, in his concluding observation, regretted that the Government of India Act would not permit 'any radical change in the social structure of the country' and naturally the legislation by itself was not complete.

Measures of tenancy reform were also carried in the legislatures of Bombay, the Central Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province. The opposition parties and especially landlords characterized the tenancy bills as expropriatory in character. They were intended, it was alleged, to widen the cleavage in relations between landlords and tenants and would lead to class war. But, in fact, a revolutionary attitude to landlordism was not adopted in most of the provinces and the tenancy problem could not be made a direct class issue by the Congress party. The Government needed the co-operation of the zamindars as also that of kisans. Naturally such measures were usually adopted in accordance with Congress-Zamindar agreement in most of the provinces. The members of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee visited the provinces to bring about amicable settlements of the problem. They succeeded in avoiding direct confrontation in most cases although the All India Federation of Land Holders exerted great pressure for the postponement of all reform measures.

All tenancy bills passed by different legislatures were finally enforced as laws with due approval of the respective governors. Only one bill, i.e. the Madras Estates Land (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 1937, passed by the Orissa Legislature was held for the consideration of the governor-general who finally withheld his assent. A detailed account of the bill is necessary to understand its radical nature.

The Madras Estates Land (Orissa Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 23 September 1937 by the premier himself. It was applicable to those areas which had come from Madras Province to Orissa in 1936. In those ex-Madras areas of Orissa, the zamindars realized very high rents from the tenants according to the provisions of the Madras Estates Land Act, 1908. The zamindari rent was generally calculated on the basis of half the gross produce of the land. This was very high in comparison with the rents of the raiyatwari areas of the province. The Bill aimed at ending this anomalous position and to make it obligatory that the collector should reduce the rent to that prevailing in the nearest raiyatwari areas for similar lands with similar advantages. The Bill allowed a margin of only two annas excess in a rupee for zamindari rents over raiyatwari ones.

The Bill became a controversial measure from the start. It was opposed tooth and nail by the opposition, especially by the Raja of Khallikote whose interests would suffer under the proposed legislation. Speaking at the stage of the introduction of the bill, the Raja said that it was a 'revolutionary measure unknown in the history of legislation in India'. He also claimed that it was *ultra vires* and beyond the power of the assembly under the Government of India Act, 1935, to introduce such an 'expropriatory' bill. However, his opposition was set aside and the premier justified the introduction of the bill in a forceful speech. He said that the proposed measure was neither revolutionary nor expropriatory in character. 'I do say', he emphasized, 'that nowhere in Orissa the raiyats are so very helpless, so very miserable and so much oppressed and depressed as raiyats in the zamindari areas of South Orissa.'²² The bill was sent to the select committee for careful consideration.

Before the bill was brought back to the house, the Congress Legislative Party was prepared to grant some concessions to the zamindars of South Orissa on certain conditions. The Party was even willing to postpone the consideration of the bill on the grounds that the Madras Government had set up a committee to make a thorough enquiry into the condition of the peasants with a view to introducing necessary tenancy legislation. The Congress Government in Orissa was prepared to wait till their enquiry was complete. But the party insisted that the postponement of the discussion of the bill would be considered only when the zamindars agreed to make a substantial reduction in the rents collected from the raiyats. But they were not prepared to do this or reduce shares in the crops realized from the peasants. The negotiations for a compromise broke down.

The bill was passed on 5 February 1938. But the governor did not give his assent to the bill and, in May 1938, it was reserved for the assent of the Governor-General of India, much to the disappointment of the

people. The Congress leaders appealed to him not to delay his assent to the bill. The All-India Kisan Organization was very much interested in this piece of legislation because it was to serve as a model for tenancy reforms in other parts of the country. Professor N.G. Ranga, a prominent Kisan leader, issued a statement from Cuttack declaring that his organization would make it an all-India issue. He urged the ministry to be prepared for a bitter fight with the British authorities on this matter. But Lord Linlithgow, the Governor-General, did not take any decision on the bill for a long time. He was scheduled to visit Orissa in the last week of July 1939, and naturally both the parties approached him. The governor wanted that the viceroy should persuade the premier to accept a compromise with the landlords of South Orissa.²³ However, no compromise was possible as the terms offered were not acceptable. It was pointed out that the announcement of the governor-general's assent to the bill, while he was in Orissa, would be very much appreciated by the people of the province. But it was not done, and the authorities still hoped for a local compromise. The ministry was not prepared to yield and the matter could not be settled till the resignation of the Congress Ministry in November 1939. Finally, the governor-general vetoed the bill in February 1941, nearly three years after the assembly had adopted it. Justifying the decision, it was stated that

it was apparent from the proceedings of the Orissa Assembly in respect of the Bill that, though complicated agrarian questions were involved, there had been no general investigation of them prior to the promotion of the Bill in the legislature, neither had there been any preliminary negotiations conducted by the provincial Government with representatives of the two interests involved, that is to say, the landholders and the tenants.²⁴

In Madras, a committee of the legislature with T. Prakasam, the Revenue Minister, as chairman, was appointed to enquire into the condition of the peasants in the areas under the Permanent Settlement. The Madras Estates Land Enquiry Committee took the view that, in the areas under the Permanent Settlement, the ryot, not the zamindar, was the owner of the land. Therefore, it recommended that the level of rents prevailing when the Settlement was made in 1802 should be restored. But this radical proposal was carried by a majority of only five, including the chairman, to four.

The report was placed before the Legislative Assembly and it came up for discussion on 20 January 1939. T. Prakasam contended that the recommendations of the committee were neither revolutionary nor expropriatory. Nor were they of a socialistic or communistic character. The majority recommendations were based on solid facts and were formulated by the committee to 'render bare justice which had been denied to ryots for some reason or other for a very long time'. A Congress member

then moved that the government be asked to bring forward suitable legislation based on the report of the committee. While the other Congress members supported this, the zamindars and certain other members of the opposition strongly opposed it. The members of the Muslim League gave it a qualified support. On 26 January, C. Rajagopalachari, the Premier, contended that the zamindar was neither absolute owner nor co-owner with the ryot of the land and was merely holder of an office under the state, collecting revenue from particular areas, for which he was paid very liberal commission under the Settlement of 1802. No question of compensating the zamindar, the premier maintained, arose. Where a whole system had gone wrong, no state could afford to pay compensation for putting an end to that system. He appealed to the house to accept the report whose two cardinal points were that ownership of the land was in the *pattadar* and that the zamindar's usurpation of the state's right in respect of enhancement of revenue should be put an end to. The next day, i.e., on 27 January 1939, the house accepted the Revenue Minister's motion that the report of the committee be taken into consideration with an amendment commending the government 'to bring in Legislation at an early date on the general lines of the majority recommendations of the committee'. However, the Madras Ministry did not present any bill in the house on the basis of the resolution till their resignation at the end of October 1939.

Besides these two examples of the radical Congress attitude to the agrarian problem, the other tenancy laws adopted in the Congress provinces were intended to tackle the immediate problems in order to mitigate some of the distress of the poor cultivators. At the same time, the Congress initiative to understand the problems of the kisans succeeded to a great extent in checking an alarming state of agrarian unrest organized by the All-India Kisan Sangha and other radical kisan sabhas established in different parts of the country.

(b) Relief of Peasant Indebtedness

The relief of peasant indebtedness was linked with tenancy reform in the Congress election manifesto. Naturally a series of Moneylenders or Debtors' Relief Acts were passed in Bihar, Bombay, the Central Provinces, Madras, the North-West Frontier Province and Orissa. The main provisions of the measure were:

- (i) The registration of moneylenders on payment of a small fee was required for the regulation of their business. No one who was not a registered moneylender could institute any suit for recovery of his dues from a debtor. All moneylenders were bound to maintain proper accounts and give proper receipts to their debtors for all payments made.
- (ii) Cancellation or reduction of interest on debts incurred before a

certain date. It was pointed out that the Muslim Law did not recognize interest, because Muslims regarded taking interest as sin. Hindu Law, on the other hand recognized interest, but put a limitation on the demand of the moneylenders, namely, that no moneylender in any circumstances could realize interest more than the amount he had advanced. This was known as the principle of *damdupat*. In course of time these wholesome rules were forgotten. The Congress ministries once again introduced the principle of *damdupat* in several provinces.

- (iii) The rates of interest had been fixed at $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent in Madras and the NWFP, and 9 per cent in Bihar and Orissa in the case of secured loans and 12 per cent in case of unsecured loans. The Bihar Moneylenders' Act exempted a portion of the holding of an agricultural debtor from sale in execution of a decree for the amount due, the area so exempted being one acre, if the holding did not exceed three acres, and more up to the one third of the entire holding if the holding was of more than three acres.
- (iv) Some penalties were provided for, including the cancellation of registration certificates, for illegal extortion. To guard against fraud, the Bihar Act provided that where a loan was advanced on a registered document, the entire amount of the loan or as much of it as was payable in cash must be paid in the presence of the Sub-Registrar.
- (v) In Madras, the problem was tackled in a more comprehensive way by the adoption of the Agriculturists' Debt Relief Act which came into force on 22 March 1938. The object of the Act was not merely to control moneylending, but also to give relief to indebted agriculturists by scaling down their existing debts. Debt conciliation boards were set up in all the districts to assist in the scaling down of debts according to the provisions of the Act and a sum of Rs 50 lakhs was set apart to be given as loans to agriculturists to pay off their scaled down debts.

In order to reduce rural indebtedness and improve the condition of the people, especially the agriculturists, the Congress ministry in Orissa wanted to reorganize the Co-operative Department and the co-operative banks in Orissa. With the help of experts in the field, an enquiry was held to ascertain the existing condition of the co-operative movement and the working of the co-operative banks in the province. On 24 January 1938, the premier himself introduced the Orissa Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank Bill, 1938, in the Legislative Assembly. Provision was made for the rayats to borrow money from the Mortgage Banks at low interest for the development of their lands and for other agricultural purposes. During the discussion of the bill, it was pointed out that the

agriculturists sometimes took loans for improving their lands, but in fact spent the money for the marriage of their daughters or for such other social functions. Therefore, a provision was made in the bill for proper scrutiny of the applications for such loans and the necessary supervision of their utilization.²⁵ It was also intended to establish a Provincial Co-operative Bank which was to be managed fully by a Board of Directors nominated by the government. This bank was to control all other co-operative banks in the province and would also supervise their activities for at least six years in the first instance. Thus the Government of Orissa planned to revive the co-operative movement in the province to check rural indebtedness.

(c) Rural Reconstruction Programmes

It is common knowledge that the real India lives in the villages. So, if the independence of the country was to be achieved, the Congress was well aware that the villages must be improved and the teeming millions inhabiting them must be uplifted so that they might be able to contribute their due share to the struggle for freedom when called upon to do so. Immediately on assumption of office, all Congress governments applied themselves to the all-important task of rural reconstruction.

In the United Provinces, for rebuilding the social, cultural and economic life of the rural areas, the government selected for intensive work about 20 centres in each district, each centre comprising 20–30 villages and placed in charge of an organizer who was to act as 'the friend, philosopher and guide' of the inhabitants of his centre. He was to awaken and arouse the people from the prevailing inertia, to convince them that they could improve their lot by their own efforts and galvanize them into action. The organizer was expected to complete his task in three or four years. His work would be supervised by the district association which consisted of public spirited rural development workers of the locality. Funds were to be allotted to those associations to be spent in the villages selected for rural development in accordance with the directions given by the government.

In Madras, a separate fund was constituted to facilitate the execution of a comprehensive scheme spread over a period of ten years to ensure the supply of drinking water to every village. The fund had been started with an initial contribution of Rs 15 lakhs by the government. A seven-year programme of road development had been drawn up by the government which would cost Rs 118.61 lakhs. To avoid waste and to ensure uniformity of policy, district boards were asked to submit a five-year plan for the improvement of their village roads.

In Bombay, the government attached considerable importance to the question of medical relief to the rural population. Two important schemes were sanctioned in this connection. The first was to provide

subsidized medical practitioners in the villages. 161 centres were established in different parts of the province. The subsidy was to be given to allopathic, ayurvedic and unani medical practitioners who undertook to work in the rural areas. The second scheme provided for the appointment of four additional qualified nurses or midwives in each of the 19 districts of the province. They were required either to work in the district local board dispensaries or to settle and work in a group of villages like the subsidized medical practitioners.

In the Central Provinces, a rural uplift scheme for the establishment of 50 centres during 1938-9 was drawn up. It combined rural uplift and subsidiary occupations as it was considered that without some means of economic improvement much headway could not be made in the direction of better farming, better sanitation and better living. In this scheme, a prominent place was given to the encouragement of hand-spinning and hand-weaving. The All-India Village Industries Association and the All-India Spinners' Association, both with headquarters at Wardha, were expected to supply trained workers to serve in the rural uplift centres in the province. Each centre was to cover villages within a radius of five miles of the central village. Such centres would be selected from among villages having a tradition of spinning or a profitable cottage industry which could be revived through the efforts of local men with government help. Each centre was to be placed under the charge of one paid trained worker, training being provided at a central institute for a period of about nine months. The general welfare activities in such centres would embrace sanitation, health and hygiene, village roads, cleaning of wells and tanks, and provision of water-supply, adult education and agricultural propaganda. The production of khadi would be the principal industry and other subsidiary industries such as oil-pressing, rope-making, rice-husking, etc., could also be introduced with some technical improvements.

Thus most of the Congress ministries launched some rural reconstruction programmes as welfare measures for the masses. They were, no doubt, modest beginnings, but had the Congress ministries continued in office for a longer period, such programmes would certainly have been pursued with much vigour and with better chances of success.

6. Programmes for Industrial Development

(a) *Khadi and Village Industries*

The Congress constructive programme gave a prominent place to the development of khadi and other cottage industries. Gandhi had established the All-India Spinners' Association and All-India Village Industries Association to spearhead the khadi programme in the country. He was the president of the first association and the moving spirit of the

other one also. The Congress recognized both as autonomous and wholly non-political. Gandhi wanted that all parties and all communities should combine to uplift the villages 'economically, morally and hygienically'. While inaugurating the All-India Village Industries and Khadi Exhibition on the eve of the annual session of the Congress at Haripura in Gujarat on 10 February 1938, Gandhi spoke emphatically:

I have often said that if seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the centre of all handicrafts. Thus my faith in the spinning wheel is growing every day and I see it more and more clearly that the sun of the wheel will alone illumine the planets of other handicrafts.²⁶

When the Congress ministries assumed office, they found enough scope to put their ideals into practice. In most of the provinces elaborate schemes for the spread of khadi and the establishment of village industries were adopted to mitigate the distress of the poor villagers.

Orissa, as one of the poorest provinces in the country, laid special emphasis on this. The premier was anxious to prepare a scheme involving minimum expense for which he sought the advice of J. Kumarppa, Chairman of All-India Khadi Board. He issued instructions to the heads of departments to purchase swadeshi goods and khadi for official use. A resolution, unanimously adopted in the Assembly on 3 September 1937, read: 'This Assembly recommends to the Government that the cloth to be used in respect of uniforms to be supplied to servants of Government, be of pure khaddar.'²⁷

The machinery of the All-India Village Industries Association was utilized in starting and developing village industries and crafts in Orissa. An attempt was made to produce *gur* on a large scale from palmyra and date trees by indigenous processes. Seventy-five trained workers were sent to four different parts of the province to instruct the villagers in this matter. The government also decided to start a Village Industries Institute at Cuttack to train forty workers every year in various crafts. It was also decided to explore the possibilities of developing the forest resources of Orissa. Attempts were made to improve and develop the horn industry and filigree works along with the tanning industry. It may be mentioned here that when the annual session of Gandhi Seva Sangha was held at Delang in the district of Puri towards the end of March 1938, a big exhibition of indigenous industries and handicrafts was arranged there which was much appreciated by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and Acharya Kripalani, among others. Gandhi inaugurated it and praised the efforts of the Congress ministry.

In Madras, the passing of the Madras State Aid to Industries (Amendment) Act, the Madras Sale of Cloth Act, and the extension of the Khaddar Protection Act and the substantial assistance given to the development of the khadi industry, had helped the promotion of khadi and cottage industries. Further, in October 1938, the government sanctioned about two lakhs of rupees to the All-India Spinners' Association for the development of hand-spinning and khadi. A sum of Rs 1,32,000 was spent to help the handloom industry. The government deputed ten apprentices to Wardha for training in the manufacture of hand-made paper and another batch of ten to undergo training in oil pressing at Wardha. Heads of departments were required to give preference to Indian-made goods when purchasing articles for the use of their departments.

In the United Provinces, the main effort of the Congress government in the industrial field had been to develop cottage industries. The Provincial Rural Development Board approved of a detailed scheme costing Rs 2 lakhs for the development of industries in villages. Eight surveyors were appointed to enquire and obtain adequate information about a number of village-based industries such as carpentry, leather working and tanning, glass and iron work, fabrication of hosiery, toys and ornamental pottery, and preparation of ghee, oils and soaps. The problem was two-fold; first to improve the quality of the articles produced and, secondly, to secure a market for them. In order to train instructors of rural industries, two polytechnics were aided for the training of 150 students. They were expected to guide the villagers in improving the quality of their goods. Available master craftsmen were also appointed to train the village artisans in improved methods and techniques. Adequate arrangements were made for the disposal of goods produced by the village industries.

The Government of Bihar sanctioned grants to the Bihar Branch of the All-India Spinners' Association, both during 1937/38 and 1938/39, to promote the production of hand-spun and hand-woven cloth on a large scale and also to extend the work to new areas. Besides, the Cottage Industries Institute at Patna and the Silk Institute at Bhagalpur were utilized to revive the manufacture of hand-made paper and the indigenous silk industry. Steps were taken to supply *tasar* seed-eggs to the *tasar* silk rearers in remote villages. Two handicrafts institutes were started at Jharia and Kustore to help women workers of the coalfields who were debarred from underground work. Steps were also taken to train middle-class boys, besides the professional class of Mochis and Chamars in improved methods of leather tanning and leather work.

In the Central Provinces, a number of schemes were adopted to encourage and promote the speedy development of khadi and village

industries. The government took advantage of the institute maintained by the All-India Village Industries Association at Wardha in the province where Gandhi's Sevasram was also located. A number of boys could be conveniently trained in the institute to spread hand-spinning and hand-weaving in rural areas. Besides, the government opened two cottage industries institutes, one at Jabalpur and another at Akola where courses in weaving, *darrie*-making, toy-making and basket-making had been introduced. A scheme for the establishment of a dead cattle institution in the Tannery Buildings in Nagpur was approved in order to train village *chamars* in different types of work for the disposal of dead cattle. Steps were taken to set up umbrella-making as a cottage industry in the province.

Thus, the Congress provinces provided some momentum in the development of village industries and especially in the spread of khadi. But more time and money were needed to make those ventures economically viable units of production for the amelioration of the condition of poor masses in rural areas.

(b) National Planning

While emphasizing the need for the development of khadi and cottage industries in the country, the Indian National Congress also initiated the process of establishing large-scale industries in India through national planning. In pursuance of a resolution of the Working Committee, a conference of provincial ministers of industries was convened by the Congress president in Delhi on 2–3 October 1938. By special invitation, M. Visvesvaraya, Dr Meghnad Saha, G.D. Birla, Lala Shri Ram and Lala Shankarlal were also present. Presiding over the conference, the first of its kind since the Congress undertook the responsibility of government in the provinces, Subhas Chandra Bose rightly pointed out that the problems of poverty and unemployment looming large in national life could be tackled only by utilizing all our resources to the best advantage. This could not be achieved merely by the improvement of agriculture. Industrial development was essential so that a large proportion of the village population could be diverted to industrial occupations. He cited the example of the marvellous progress made in Soviet Russia by schemes of planned industrialization. National planning was the only way that could take India on the path to all-round prosperity. He also made it clear that there was no inherent conflict between cottage industries and large-scale industries. Each was to be confined to its allotted sphere.

The conference adopted certain important principles of national planning as follows:

- (1) National autonomy in the field of principal needs and requirements.

- (2) Growth and development of the mother industries.
- (3) Technical education and research.
- (4) Economic survey of the country with a view to collecting the necessary data.

The conference also passed several resolutions based on the principles of national planning. It urged the establishment of a National Planning Committee to pave the way for the establishment of an All-India National Planning Commission.

As recommended by the conference, the Congress president announced the appointment of the National Planning Committee (NPC) consisting of twelve members, with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as its chairman. The first meeting of the NPC was held in Bombay on 18 December 1938. Its deliberations continued for five days and an elaborate questionnaire of 167 questions with 70 supplementaries was prepared. This was circulated to all provincial governments, Indian States, universities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, firms and private individuals. At the same time, to set the ball rolling, the following resolution was passed:

The Planning Committee is of opinion that the various Provincial Governments should create provincial and where necessary, inter-provincial river commissions for the regulation, development and control of various rivers and waterways for the purpose of providing the following:

- Water for agriculture and industries,
- Hydro-electric power,
- Cheap transport,
- Prevention of erosion, silting and floods and
- Safeguarding the health of the people.

The Committee was further of the opinion that the Planning Committee should also consider and deal with problems of the shifting of river beds.²⁸

The second meeting of the NPC was also held in Bombay, from 4 to 17 June 1939. It was decided to enlarge the scope of its work and, consequently, 27 sub-committees were appointed to consider specific problems of the national plan separately. These 27 sub-committees were again divided under 7 main heads, namely: (1) agriculture, (2) transport and communications, (3) industries, (4) demographic relations, (5) commerce and finance, (6) public welfare, and (7) education. Experts were invited to serve on these committees. Pandit Nehru, the chairman of the NPC, while justifying its enlarged scope, observed: 'We have to draw up a full plan which would apply to a free India and at the same time indicate what should be done now.' He expressed the hope that the provincial governments, besides continuing their financial support, would readily permit their officials to sit on the sub-committees. In fact,

not only all provincial governments co-operated with the programme of national planning, but also some of the important Indian States like Hyderabad, Mysore, Baroda, Bhopal, Travancore and Cochin supported the ideas and vision of the Congress leadership concerning the industrial and economic regeneration of the country. Professor K.T. Shah was appointed as the Honorary General Secretary of the NPC. However, only two months after this crucial meeting, the Second World War broke out and the Congress was out of power by November 1939. Planning was then relegated to the background and Congress efforts to prepare a draft plan could not materialize till independence was won.

(c) The Problem of Labour

No Congress province, except Orissa and the North-West Frontier Province, which had no heavy industries, was wholly free from labour trouble during the period under review. There was serious trouble in places like Ahmedabad, Bombay and Kanpur. The Government of Bombay alone adopted a bill, the Trades Disputes Bill, in November 1938 to prevent lightning strikes and lock-outs. While introducing the bill, the premier observed that the labour policy of the government was to maintain industrial peace and at the same time to ensure a fair deal to the workers without their having to resort to strikes as far as possible. He further pointed out that, during the last 17 years, there was one strike or lock-out every four days and the brunt of this industrial unrest fell on the textile industry. Therefore, a Textile Enquiry Committee was appointed and its interim report, recommending increased wages and other improved conditions, was readily accepted by the government. The gain to labour amounted to about a crore of rupees. The Trades Disputes Bill, the premier strongly emphasized, was in the best interests of the workers. The government stood for 'class collaboration and not class conflict'.²⁹ But the opposition declared the bill to be reactionary and undemocratic. The Communists declared that the rights of labour had been violated and they organized not only anti-government demonstrations, but also planned a general strike throughout the province on 7 November 1938. Even Dr Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party followed the Communist lead. But on the appointed day only 17 out of 77 mills in Bombay were forced to close for lack of labour. The response in other towns was poor. There were some disturbances in Bombay city, but the government succeeded in restoring order quickly.

In Madras the policy of the government in regard to labour disputes was to encourage 'internal settlements'. The government actively interfered and brought about settlement of all strikes, as a result of which the workers were benefited to a considerable extent by way of increased wages and improved service conditions.

In the United Provinces, serious disturbances occurred at Kanpur.

The trouble started soon after the Congress ministry had taken office in July 1937. A strike began in the cotton mills and a settlement was brought about by the intervention of the premier. Another strike was settled on an appeal by Pandit Nehru in September 1937. But the biggest strike occurred in May 1938 when all the mills in Kanpur were closed. As in Bombay, the Government of UP had set up a Labour Enquiry Committee and most of its recommendations were accepted. But the employers were not prepared to yield easily. Only after prolonged discussion with the government could a settlement be reached and peace restored. The government undertook certain labour welfare measures and opened five centres in Kanpur and one in Lucknow. Each centre had a dispensary, a reading room and arrangements for games and recreation. It was decided to construct a number of workmen's quarters which could be let out to them at reasonable rents.

The Congress Working Committee constituted a labour committee in April 1938 consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Jairamdas Daulatram, Shankerlal Banker, Jayaprakash Narayan, M.R. Masani and J.B. Kripalani (Secretary). In May 1938, a meeting of the labour committee was held at Bombay in which it expressed satisfaction at the recommendations made by the Bombay Textile Enquiry Committee and mostly implemented by the employers in Bombay Presidency. It also welcomed the appointment of committees by the governments of Bombay, the UP and Bihar, for enquiring into the wages and other conditions of workers employed in different industrial concerns.³⁰ Thus the Congress authorities kept a vigilant watch on the labour situation in the country.

7. Social and Educational Reform

(a) Prohibition

'The most striking social reform,' observed one British scholar, 'and the one which only Congress Ministries attempted with genuine ardour and on a substantial scale, was prohibition.'³¹ It was one of Gandhi's most cherished projects. He placed his views about total prohibition before the Working Committee in August 1937. After a good deal of discussion, the following resolution was passed:

In as much as Prohibition has been one of the chief planks of the Congress since the inauguration of the N.C.O. movement in 1930 and thousands of men and women have had to suffer imprisonment and physical injury in furtherance of this cause, the Working Committee is of opinion that it is incumbent upon the Congress Ministries to work to this end. The Committee expects them to bring about total prohibition in their respective provinces within three years. The Working Committee appeals to the ministries in the other provinces and to the Indian States also to adopt this programme of moral and social uplift of the people.³²

The main difficulty was financial. Excise duties had been one of the mainstays of provincial revenue. In 1936–7 they constituted 17 per cent of the total provincial revenues. In Bombay and Madras, the proportion was 26 and 25 per cent respectively. By the Government of India Act, 1935, excise was made a provincial subject to be administered by the popular ministries. Naturally the opportunity was utilized by the Congress to introduce some measures of reform in the excise policy which aimed at total prohibition in near future.

In the *Harijan* of 31 July 1937, Gandhi answered at length the critics who opposed his programme: 'Let it be remembered,' he said with deep moral conviction, 'that this drink and drugs revenue is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return ten-fold to the taxpayer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral and mental and physical. It falls like a dead weight on those who are least able to bear it.' Besides, Gandhi was also sure that the loss of revenue was only apparent. The removal of such a degrading tax would enable the drinker to earn and spend better so that it would be ultimately a substantial economic gain to the nation. 'Prohibition,' he said, 'should begin by preventing any new shop from being licensed and closing some that are in danger of becoming a nuisance to the public. . . . No new shops should be opened on any account. Whatever immediately is possible in law should be done without a moment's thought so far revenue is concerned.'³³

The Congress ministries were generally guided by the spirit of the Working Committee resolution and the moral directives from Gandhi for tackling the problem. However, none of them proceeded to devise the financial plans required to meet the strain its execution would involve. Obviously, therefore, the pace was slow, but nevertheless steady steps were taken by all Congress Ministries to work out schemes of prohibition in their respective provinces.

As an initial measure, the Bombay Government introduced prohibition in three rural areas in the province. Ahmedabad city and cantonment and 27 villages around its suburbs were also declared to be dry areas where the retail sale to the public of country liquor, *toddy* and foreign liquor including spirits, wines and beer, was stopped. The government also ordered all liquor shops in the town and in the island of Bombay to be closed on the monthly pay day. Besides, the government closed down, since April 1938, 205 country spirit shops, 507 *toddy* shops and booths, 60 hemp drug shops, 72 opium shops and 11 liquor shops, without consideration of the loss of revenue. A very ambitious scheme was drafted in 1938 to cover the whole province in three years and, in 1939/40, it was applied not only to certain rural areas, but also to Bombay city. With great enthusiasm and with a magnificent demonstra-

tion, the prohibition programme in the city was inaugurated on 1 August 1939. The Congress Working Committee congratulated the Bombay Government on its bold venture. To recover partially the loss of revenue, the government did not hesitate to levy a tax of 10 per cent on the letting value of houses and lands in urban areas. This was widely resented in Bombay, but Premier B.G. Kher most emphatically defended the measure. 'Prohibition shall succeed,' he said, 'and that too, now. Propertied people shall pay for it. If they pay, willingly, we shall be happy. Otherwise we will take it.'³⁴

In Madras, C. Rajagopalachari was an ardent advocate of prohibition. But the pace was rather slow compared to that of Bombay owing to financial considerations. On 1 October 1937 prohibition was introduced only in the district of Salem. It was extended to Chittoor and Cuddapah districts on 1 October 1938. The people enthusiastically co-operated in carrying out the programme and an improvement was clearly noticed in the material and moral condition of the people of those areas.

In UP, the Government started working on the policy of prohibition from 1 April 1938 gradually to cover the whole province. First, total prohibition was introduced in the districts of Etah and Mainpuri. Next, the number of excise shops in the remainder of the province was reduced by 25 per cent. Then the retail price of each kind of intoxicant was fixed at a level substantially higher than the prevalent one. The majority of shops in the districts of Jaunpur, Bijnor, Allahabad and Lucknow were then taken up for direct management by the excise department through its own paid agency. At those state-managed shops, there was to be no consumption on the premises. The conditions for issue of vending licenses, such as those relating to the hours within which sale was permitted, the maximum quantities to be sold to individuals, etc., were rigidly enforced. Finally, temperance propaganda was organized throughout the province and in particular in the two districts where prohibition had been introduced. Consequently, the consumption of various excisable intoxicants was reported to have been greatly reduced. It was most marked in the case of country liquor, the consumption of which in some places decreased by more than 40 to 50 per cent. It was believed that temperance had made considerable headway in the province.

In the Central Provinces, prohibition was first introduced in the district of Saugor, Narsinghpur Sub-division, Akola Taluk, and the industrial towns of Katni, Hinganghat and Badnera. It was also decided to close down all *charas* shops and to prohibit the import, possession and sale of *charas* throughout the province from 1 January 1939. Further, in the budget proposals for 1939/40, the government decided to extend the prohibition scheme to two more districts.

A Prohibition Bill was passed by the Bihar Legislative Assembly on 26 April 1938. It was modelled on the Madras Bill, giving government authority to introduce prohibition in selected areas in respect of one or more excisable article, with the power to extend it to other areas of the province and to provide certain exemptions for the use of intoxicants for specific purposes. On 1 April 1938, prohibition was first introduced in the district of Saran where it worked successfully. From April 1939, prohibition was extended to the whole of the Hajipur Sub-division, to five police-stations in Ranchi, to five police-stations in Hazaribagh, and the whole of Dhanbad Sub-division. Besides, a shopless zone of 5 miles was generally kept around all these dry areas. The government also vigorously carried on propaganda work on the need and importance of temperance. Further, attempts were made to reduce the consumption of spirits in other districts of Bihar. It was decided in 1939/40 not to settle 451 liquor shops which were located at objectionable sites. In Purnea, some country-liquor shops were abolished and the hours of sale in Dhanbad was curtailed. The ministry also contemplated the extension of prohibition to the districts of Ranchi and Champaran.

In Orissa, addiction was more common among the Harijans and labour classes as an escape from the pangs of hunger and distress and also from sickness. It was found that *ganja* in Puri, opium in Balasore and country liquor in Koraput and Sambalpur districts were consumed in huge quantities. In the district of Balasore, it was observed that opium was consumed to such an extent that no other single district, in the whole of India, consumed such big quantities of the drug. Therefore, it was decided first to tackle the problem of opium addiction in the district of Balasore. A comprehensive scheme was prepared. As a preliminary step to the introduction of total prohibition, certain arrangements were made from 15 October 1938. The majority of existing shops were closed from that date, only 14 being retained on the borders of the district. At the same time registering centres were opened where addicts could be registered for the supply of the drug at a fixed price after proper medical examination. It was also declared that, from 1 April 1939, only those persons who had got themselves registered would be supplied with opium and no one should bring opium from outside into the district of Balasore. A Prohibition Officer was appointed in September 1938 and he was placed in charge of the detailed arrangements for introduction of the scheme in the district from October 1938.

As the declared policy of the government was to implement the programme of total prohibition, a number of reform measures were introduced in 1938/39. They were:

- (i) shops opened in 1937/38 were abolished and no new ones were allowed to come into existence;

- (ii) excise shops located at prominent places in 1937/38 were shifted back with or without compensation;
- (iii) sale of intoxicants after sunset was prohibited;
- (iv) the practice of carrying liquor home after purchase was discontinued;
- (v) sales of *toddy* were discouraged.

Besides, two bills were passed in the Assembly during the tenure of the first Congress ministry to help the programmes of prohibition. The first, the Opium (Orissa Amendment) Bill, 1939, was passed on 25 February 1939 without much discussion. Its main object was to empower excise officers to investigate offences coming under the cognizance of the Opium Act. Such an amendment was needed for effective supervision of the prohibition scheme in the district of Balasore. Another comprehensive bill for prohibition was introduced and adopted by the Orissa Legislative Assembly in September 1939. It was intended to bring about complete prohibition in the province. The Opposition did not question the principle and morality of the issue involved, but they were worried over the financial implications of the measure. However, the campaign for prohibition lost its intensity after two months, with the departure of the Congress from office.

On 3 November 1938, the Premier of the NWFP laid before the House the Prohibition Ordinance, which prohibited the manufacture, sale and consumption of intoxicating liquors and drugs in the province. It was applied in a partial form in a single district.

The Government of Assam inaugurated an opium prohibition scheme in Dibrugarh and Sibsagar Sub-divisions in 1938. With a view to hasten the total eradication of the opium evil from the province in two years, it enforced accelerated reduction of opium rations in the remaining areas of the province.

It is obvious from the table that only in the two non-Congress provinces, i.e. Bengal and Punjab, did the excise revenue actually increase; in the seven Congress provinces it declined. No Congress ministry had succeeded in finding any provincial source of revenue to make up the loss and balance their budgets. The finance minister of Bombay announced in his budget speech for 1939/40 that the intention was to appeal to the Centre as the only means of saving the province from bankruptcy. Gandhi was also concerned with the problem. But he had his own radical ideas for its solution. He 'unhesitatingly' suggested cutting the educational budget for which purpose the excise revenue was mainly used. Even short-term loans might be incurred to tide over the deficit. Ultimately, the Central Government should be approached to curtail the military budget and to give the provinces proportional grants. However, no such occasion arose as the programme of

prohibition lost its tempo soon after the resignation of the Congress ministries in November 1939.

The loss of excise revenue in the Congress-administered provinces due to prohibition can be gathered from the accompanying table:³⁵

Provincial Excise Revenues, 1936/37 and 1939/40
(in lakhs of rupees)

Province	1936/37 Actuals	1939/40 Budget Estimate	Decrease or Increase over 1936/37
Madras	396	355	— 41
Bombay	325	287	— 38
Bengal	136	157	+ 21
U.P.	153	116	— 37
Punjab	104	111	+ 7
Bihar	116	103	— 13
C.P.	64	58	— 6
Assam	36	31	— 5
N.W.F.P.	9	9	0
Sind	35	35	0
Orissa	33	23	— 10

(b) Uplift of Harijans

In the Gandhian programme of social reforms, the removal of untouchability, the Harijan movement, occupied a most prominent place. When the Indian National Congress was not engaged in a mass movement, its constructive programmes were directed towards the upliftment of Harijans and the removal of untouchability.

In Orissa, the movement against untouchability had a special significance. Gandhi's famous *padayatra* for the Harijan movement began from Orissa in 1934. That had resulted in awakening mass consciousness regarding the matter. The Congress ministry, following the policy of the party and the ideals of Gandhiji, adopted several measures for the uplift of Harijans and other backward groups like the tribals. Financial provisions were made in the budgets for encouraging education of Harijan boys by way of stipends, scholarships and grants to hostels, etc. In the annual meeting of the Gandhi Seva Sangha held towards the end of March 1938 at Delang in the district of Puri, Gandhi raised the issue of Harijans in a different context. His intention was to open the doors of the Hindu temples, specially the Jagannath Temple, to the Harijans. During his first *padayatra* from Puri in 1934, he had tried to convince the *sanatani* Hindus to relax their orthodox rules. As he could not succeed in that year, he raised the issue again in 1938 at the Delang Conference. He

said, with pathos, that Jagannath was regarded as the Lord of the Universe whereas the Harijans or the so-called untouchables were debarred from His precincts. Therefore, he was the Lord, not of all but of only those who had made capital out of His name and fame and had kept out the Harijans from the Temple. Gandhi fervently hoped that the people of Orissa would not disappoint him on his sacred mission and would try their best to throw open the doors of the temple soon for the Harijans.

During the conference, an incident took place on 28 March which revealed Gandhiji's deep concern for the Harijans and their cause. That evening, Kasturba and Durgaben, wife of Mahadev Desai, had visited the Temple of Puri. Gandhi came to know about this after their return. He was deeply anguished and could not sleep that night. He called for explanations from his wife, Durgaben and Mahadev Desai. These were not satisfactory. He had declared earlier that so long as the doors of the temple were closed to the Harijans, he would not visit it himself and persuade all who had faith in him not to do so. If his wife and close associates would not obey him, that would not be healthy examples for others. In fact, the incident raised Gandhiji's blood pressure and he fell ill.³⁶ The incident considerably influenced the Congress leaders and workers who were present at the conference and they pledged to work wholeheartedly for the cause of the Harijans.

The Congress Ministry of Bombay was the first to pass a measure seeking to remove the disabilities of Harijans as regards temple entry. The Act removed all difficulties in the way of those trustees of public temples who were convinced of the justice of the claim of Harijans to make use of Hindu public temples and who desired to open the temples under their control to Harijans. At the same time the government notified that hotel-keepers would not be issued licences in future if they refused admission to Harijans and even their current licences were liable to be cancelled for such discrimination.

In Madras, the Removal of Civil Disabilities Bill, a non-official bill, moved by M.C. Rajah was passed into law in August 1938 with the support of the government. It provided for the removal of civil disabilities of Harijans in regard to appointments to any public office or in regard to access to public wells, ponds, roads etc. Both the government and opposition benches welcomed the measure as a great piece of long overdue social reform. In December, the Malabar Temple Entry Act was passed. It was a bold step in a very orthodox province. But the premier hoped that all would co-operate in seeing that the measure was put into effect in the best interests of Hinduism. Once the temples were thrown open in Malabar, in absolute peace and with sincere hearts, the premier was sure the path would become easy for the reform in other districts.

The Madras Temple Entry Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated in early 1939 which indemnified the officials, trustees and other persons in the Madura, Tanjore and Tinevelly Districts in which there had been a good deal of reformist agitation. In August 1939 the Madras Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act confirmed the ordinance. It empowered the trustees of any temple in the province to open it to Harijans. Piloting the bill in the assembly, the Premier, C. Rajagopalachari, sought the co-operation of all in the eradication of 'a long-standing and obstinate custom'. He assured the house that there was no political motive behind the measure. It was conceived in a purely religious spirit. The Congress Working Committee congratulated the Madras Government for removing legal obstacles in the way of Harijans entering Hindu temples for worship. In fact, the famous Meenakshi Temple of Madurai and some minor temples were actually thrown open to the Harijans before the resignation of the Congress Ministry.

Besides these enactments, a large sum was set apart in the budget for providing educational facilities, maintenance of hostels and boarding houses for scholars, and providing drinking water supply and other amenities to the members of the scheduled classes. Provisions for advancing loans to Harijans had been considerably increased. The poor pupils of the scheduled classes were exempted from the payment of fees in all arts colleges. District Advisory Boards and a Provincial Advisory Board were constituted to advise the collectors and the commissioner of labour respectively on all matters relating to the uplift of Harijans.

In the Central Provinces, the Harijans Temple Worship (Removal of Disabilities) Bill was introduced in the Assembly in April 1939. It was circulated for eliciting public opinion. Framed on the lines of the Bombay and Madras Temple Entry Bills, it aimed at removing the bar on opening temples to the Harijans. While the Harijan members of the opposition criticized it as a measure far short of their demands, those on the Congress benches supported it as the beginning of a social reform of vast magnitude. Pandit R.S. Shukla pointed out that the pace of reform must necessarily be slow and public opinion had to be ascertained at every stage. He, however, believed that if a province like Madras, which was known for its orthodoxy had opened temples, it would not be difficult to throw them open in the Central Provinces. But the bill could not be passed before the resignation of the ministry. The government had made budgetary provisions, like other Congress ministries, for payments of stipends to Harijan students in all grades of schools and colleges. Each District Harijan Sewak Sangh also received a grant for expenditure on the education of Harijans, including the supply of books and school materials to the students.

The greatest practical need of the Harijans was rapid advancement in

education and, in fact, the process was hastened from 1937. In Bombay almost all the separate schools for Harijans had been converted into ordinary schools, and the number of Harijans admitted to ordinary schools had steadily increased. The process was hastened in some provinces by drastic government action. Schools in Bihar, Orissa and Madras were required to accept Harijan pupils as a condition of their official recognition. They were to enjoy the same facilities as other pupils in the schools. All such measures led to a rapid increase in the number of Harijan pupils in schools in most of the Congress provinces.

(c) Educational Programmes

(i) Basic Education: The Congress ministries realized the importance of educational reforms not only for national needs, but also for awakening popular consciousness in the country. Gandhi was convinced that the prevalent mode of education was radically wrong from bottom to top. He had formulated certain propositions and asked the educationists to examine them purely on merit. So, an educational conference was summoned at Wardha on 22 October 1937 in which Dr Zakir Hussain, Aryanayakam, Congress ministers and many other distinguished people participated. Gandhi inaugurated the conference and put forward his views on the matter. 'I am convinced,' he said, 'that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful, but is positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to their parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect the urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education.' To him, the remedy lay in education by means of vocational or manual training. The scheme that he wished to place before the conference was not just teaching of some handicraft side by side with so-called liberal education, but a system under which 'the whole education should be imparted through some handicrafts or industry'. Gandhi's proposals were discussed threadbare. After the first day's deliberations, the conference converted itself into a committee to express its opinion on the propositions originally formulated by Gandhi. It was popularly known as the Zakir Hussain Committee of which Aryanayakam was the convener-cum-secretary. On 23 October 1937 the draft resolutions of the committee were discussed and ultimately passed. They were:

- (1) That in the opinion of this conference free and compulsory education be provided for seven years on a nation-wide scale. (2) That the medium of instruction be mother-tongue. (3) That the conference endorses the proposal made by Mahatma Gandhi that the process of education throughout this period should centre around some form of manual and productive work, and that all the other abilities to be developed or training to be given should, as far as possible, be integrally related to the central handicraft chosen with due regard to the environment of the child. (4) That the

conference expects that this system of education will be gradually able to cover the remuneration of the teachers.³⁷

Thus originated a new system of basic education, to be known popularly as the Wardha Scheme. The Indian National Congress, in its 51st annual session held at Haripura in February 1938, accepted and endorsed the scheme. The Congress was of the opinion that:

An All India Education Board to deal with the basic part of education be established and for this purpose requests and authorises Dr Zakir Hussain and Shri Aryanayakam to take immediate step under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, to bring such a Board into existence, in order to work out in a consolidated manner a programme of basic national education and to recommend it for acceptance to those who are in control of state or private education.

The Congress Ministries in different provinces tried their best to work out the scheme for basic education. In Bihar, a Basic Education Board was set up at the end of 1938 with Dr Syed Mahmud, the Minister of Education, as the chairman. The Patna Training School was converted into a centre for training 'basic teachers' with a 'practising school' attached to it. In early 1939 a scheme was sanctioned for the establishment of 50 experimental basic schools in one compact area in the province, the Bettiah Thana of Champaran District. The project was to be completed according to a seven-year plan so that, it could be extended each year from the lowest class to the next higher class till 1945. Thus, the first batch of students trained under the new system of basic education with a full seven-year course would emerge only in 1946. Arrangements were made for providing 'refresher' courses for teachers to be engaged in the project.

In the United Provinces, a Basic Training College, like that at Patna, with a 'practising school' attached to it, was opened at Allahabad in August 1938 and 'refresher course' centres were established in May 1939 at seven selected places in the province to train district and municipal board teachers in the task of converting their schools into basic schools. With a view to recruiting a greater number of women teachers and employing at least two women teachers in each new basic school, a training class was started from September 1938 at the Theosophical National School for Women in Banaras for a period of about eight months from training undergraduate women. After successful completion of their training, they could also be employed to train women teachers required for basic schools in the province. Thus, in the UP, the scheme of basic education was not confined to a single area; it was diffused in different parts of the province.

The Government of Bombay took a middle course. By 1939 the Wardha Scheme had been introduced in 59 schools in four compact areas and in 28 isolated schools. A special officer was appointed to expedite the development of the project. The Congress Ministry also adopted the Primary Education Amendment Bill in 1938 with a view to remedy some of the glaring defects in the machinery of primary education. The new Act made better provision for the management and control of primary schools. It was decided to give special encouragement to persons and associations to start voluntary schools in as many villages as possible. Local Boards were also encouraged to start schools in villages with a population of more than a thousand where there were no schools. With a view to making physical education compulsory for all children, a Board of Physical Education was constituted to advise the government on all matters pertaining to the question. A Training Institute for Physical Education was opened at Kandivli, near Bombay, where a hundred graduate teachers could be trained annually.

In the Central Provinces, the government introduced the project in a novel way. They wished to establish *Vidya Mandirs* (Temples of Learning). The scheme was prepared under the inspiration of Gandhi himself with the object of liquidating mass illiteracy at the minimum cost. An organizing officer of Vidya Mandir was appointed and a training school for teachers was opened at Wardha on 20 April 1938. A monthly bulletin in Hindi, entitled *Vidya Mandir Samachar*, was issued to keep the public informed of the progress. The Zakir Hussain Committee had framed the syllabus which was translated into Hindi and Marathi for local use. The cost of a school under this scheme would be only the initial cost of its erection and of an adjacent plot of land and the latter, it was hoped, would be provided gratis by some supporters of the scheme. The pay of the school teacher and its maintenance, the authors of the scheme anticipated, could be managed from the produce of its land and the sale of its handiworks. The government announced that the duty chargeable under the Stamp Act in respect of a gift deed of immovable property executed in favour of the chairman of the managing committee or the trustees of an educational institution recognized by the Government as a Vidya Mandir or established under any law regarding such institution would be remitted.

This experiment in the Central Provinces was initiated mainly by Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla, the Education Minister, who was part-author of the scheme. When he took over as the premier of the province after Dr Khare's resignation in July 1938, the scheme was pursued in right earnest. The government introduced the Vidya Mandir Bill in the Assembly and after discussion and heated controversy, the house passed the bill only a week before the resignation of the ministry in November

1939. The Muslim minority had opposed the plan from its outset and severely criticized it in the house when the bill was discussed. There was even an appeal to the governor not to give his assent to the bill. On behalf of the government, S.V. Gokhale, the Minister of Education, observed that they had not departed from the agreement reached with the Muslims on the subject. He appealed to them to extend their full co-operation for the establishment of Vidya Mandirs and Madinatulims in villages for the rapid spread of literacy. The bill, he added, would facilitate the establishment of least one school in every village managed by a village committee. It was not intended to supplant the normal educational activity of the government or of the local bodies, but designed to give corporate existence to those managing Vidya Mandirs and to make them accountable in law. It was also clarified that there was no provision debarring a Muslim from joining a Vidya Mandir or a Hindu joining a Madinatulim. The naming of an institution would depend on the wishes of the donor. By November 1939, when the bill was passed, only 100 Vidya Mandirs had been established on the initiative of the government.

Besides the Vidya Mandir scheme, another important bill, passed by the Congress Ministry regarding the speedy ending of illiteracy in the villages, was the Primary Education (Amendment) Bill, 1939. It overhauled the Act of 1920 and under its provisions the provincial government could formulate and bring into operation schemes for the spread of primary education of boys and girls in particular areas, the expenses for which were to be borne by the local bodies concerned. Thus, the Congress ministry made sincere efforts to spread primary education in the province.

The Government of Orissa set up a Board of Basic Education with Gopabandhu Chowdhury as chairman to plan and execute the scheme. Three educationists from Orissa were deputed to study the new system and then six teachers were sent for training to Wardha. The scheme was introduced in a compact area at Bari in Cuttack District and the number of schools first brought under it was only 25. The government hoped to increase this number and to widen the area, depending on the success of the scheme.

Thus the Congress ministries in their respective provinces introduced the new system of primary education on an experimental basis. Their programmes of ideal education were intended to encourage the spirit of self-help in schools, to develop the characters of the young children, to remove prejudices against manual labour and to make children recognize its dignity and worth in bringing economic prosperity to the country. On the whole, the programme of basic education was considered to

be a more healthy, attractive and creative system than the prevailing one. The Congress saw in it great potentialities for laying the foundation of true education in India. But their sudden resignation dashed all these hopes. The British authorities, though they did not abandon the scheme altogether, were not enthusiastic about it and therefore did not provide enough financial aid to these schools to continue the experiment in right earnest.

(ii) **Adult Education:** Another outstanding experiment of the Congress regime in the educational sphere was a countrywide campaign for removal of illiteracy among the adult population. Bombay took the lead in the matter and established a Board of Adult Education in 1938. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Adult Education Committee, a three-year programme was drawn up for the removal of adult illiteracy with the help of voluntary social organizations and of boys and girls from secondary schools. In Bihar, a campaign was launched by Dr Syed Mahmud, Minister of Education, at the end of April 1938 and he appealed to teachers and students throughout the province to devote their summer vacation to it. There was remarkable response in which about 14,000 volunteers started more than 12,000 literacy centres with an average attendance of about one and half lakhs per term for six weeks. During the first four months of the campaign, over 3 lakhs were made literate. Literacy classes were being conducted even in jails by the jail staff, literate prisoners and also outside voluntary teachers. The movement also spread in industrial areas like Jamshedpur. The expansion of literacy among women was making slow but steady progress. The Bihar Council of Women appealed for help and co-operation and this gave an impetus to the movement.³⁸

A similar intensive campaign was set on foot in the United Provinces. The education department created a special section under a special officer, known as the Education Expansion Officer, to supervise the programme in 48 districts of the province. In 1939 there were 2,834 schools and the numbers attending them were 83,552. In 1940, 230,000 adults including 6,000 women were reported to have become literate. In that year nearly 7,000 voluntary teachers were employed under a system which offered rewards in proportion to the number of persons made literate.³⁹ In order to attract good workers, the government further decided to give seven cash rewards to the best workers in each district. Hundreds of circulating libraries were also established in the province, each one being assigned a definite circle of at least 5 to 10 miles radius, in order to help the mass literacy movement. In fact, tremendous enthusiasm was manifested in the country and even in non-Congress provinces like the Punjab and Bengal, the public ungrudgingly lent their support to the movement.

In the meanwhile, the Central Board of Education appointed a committee headed by Dr Syed Mahmud, the Education Minister of Bihar, to consider the matter on an all-India basis. The committee, in its report submitted in 1939, categorically declared that the extension of adult education was as urgently needed in India as primary education. The literacy campaign, the report observed, had been largely sustained by unpaid volunteers, but it would require a large number of paid workers, competent teachers in particular with special training. It clearly stated that the Central Government should afford financial assistance to those provincial governments prepared to carry out approved schemes within the next five years.⁴⁰ If the Congress governments had lasted longer, they would have probably pressed the centre to grant the necessary financial assistance to enable them to pursue schemes of adult education in right earnest.

(iii) **Other Educational Measures:** Besides the emphasis on the programmes of basic education and adult education, the Congress governments also gave special attention to the spread of depressed class education, female education and reorganization of university education. All Congress ministries sanctioned additional grants for expenditure on the expansion of education of the depressed classes by all possible means. Some steps were also taken by them for the expansion of female education. With a view to encouraging girls to join boys' primary schools in UP, the government approved a scheme for the appointment of trained women teachers in primary schools for boys. In Bihar, a programme of girls' education was drawn up according to which there was to be at least one primary school for girls in every thana headquarters, a middle school in every sub-divisional headquarters, and a high school in every district-headquarters. All local bodies were instructed to spend a greater portion of their income on girls' education. In the government colleges, girls were exempted from the payment of fees. Scholarships were granted liberally to all deserving girls who were willing to go in for higher education.

In the United Provinces, the degrees of Kashi Vidyapith and Jamia Millia of Delhi were recognized as equivalent to the B.A. degree of the universities for purposes of employment in government service. In May 1938, a committee was appointed to enquire into the working of the Universities of Allahabad, Lucknow and Agra and to recommend measures for their improvement. In Orissa, the government realized the utmost necessity of establishing a university in the province. In January 1938 a conference of educationists of Orissa was summoned to discuss the problem. A committee headed by Pandit Nilakantha Das, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, was entrusted with the task of preparing a detailed report on the framework of the proposed univer-

sity. However, the committee could not submit its report by the time of the ministry's resignation in November 1939.

8. Congress Organization and Its Problems

(a) Haripura Session (19–21 February 1938)

During the first Congress administration of the provinces from 1937 to 1939, the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress were held twice, first at Haripura in February 1938 and next at Tripuri in March 1939. Haripura, situated on the banks of the river Tapti in Gujarat, was the venue of the 51st Annual Session of the Congress from 19 February to 21 February 1938. Everything was planned on an enormous scale in a panoramic layout ranging over two and a half miles. Set in simple yet beautiful surroundings, the site was named Vithal Nagar, after the great leader of Gujarat, Vithalbhai Patel. Nandalal Bose and a few other artists designed and built exquisite structures of bamboo, wood and palm leaf, fifty-one gates named after Congress leaders, leaders' huts, a rostrum, etc. in idyllic settings with a view to reflect cleanliness, purity and the simplicity of the village life. The session was attended by a large number of delegates from different parts of the country including all top Congress leaders. Gandhi was also present.

On 19 February, Subhas Chandra Bose delivered his presidential address:

The acceptance of office in the provinces [he said] as an experimental measure should not lead us to think that our future activity is to be confined only within the limits of strict constitutionalism. There is every possibility that a determined opposition to the forcible inauguration of federation may lead us into another big campaign of civil disobedience.

Expressing his views on national reconstruction for which the Congress ministries were working, the Congress president observed:

Our principal problem will be how to eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system including the abolition of landlordism. Agricultural indebtedness will have to be liquidated. Agriculture will have to be put on a scientific basis. A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under the state-ownership and the state control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in the place of the old one which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and the alien rule at home.

Bose struck a new note regarding the question of foreign policy for India. 'I attach great importance to this work,' he said, 'because I believe in the years to come, international developments will favour our struggle in India.' He urged the Congress to have a correct appreciation of the world situation at every stage so that India could take advantage of it.

While concluding his speech, he gave a clear picture of the true nature of the Indian National Congress. 'The Congress is the one supreme organ of mass struggle,' he said. 'It may have its right bloc and its left, but it is the common platform for all anti-imperialist organizations striving for Indian emancipation. Let us, therefore, rally the whole country under the banner of the Congress.' He appealed to all, especially to the leftist group, to devote all their strength and resources to the task of democratizing the Congress and reorganizing it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis.⁴¹ The Congress adopted resolutions on all important national and international problems. The resolution on the ministerial crises in UP and Bihar has been referred to earlier.

Regarding the problem of kisans, the Congress adopted a clear stand. It had already recognized the right of kisans to organize themselves in Kisan Sabhas. The Congress itself, it was claimed, was mainly a kisan organization. Vast numbers of kisans were its members and they influenced its policy also. The Congress championed their claims and wanted that the organization should spread in every village in India. But as some kisan organizations followed agitational methods, leading to violence and problems of law and order, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution as follows:

While fully recognising the right of the kisans to organise Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy. The Congress, therefore, calls upon provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever called for.⁴²

Thus, the kisans were permitted to work within the framework of the Congress programmes but not to indulge in any hostile action violating its principle.

The Haripura session appointed a high-power Constitution Committee to consider and frame rules on certain important organizational matters like indirect elections of delegates, genuine membership, proper elections, etc. The Congress president announced the names of the new Working Committee as follows: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Shri Jamnalal Bajaj (Treasurer), Shri Jairamdas Daulatram, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Shri Bhulabhai Desai, Dr Patabhi Sitaramayya, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Shri Hare Krishna Mahtab and Shri J.B. Kripalani (General Secretary).

(b) Ministerial Crisis in CP

Only a few months after the Congress session at Haripura, a serious ministerial crisis arose in the Central Provinces. The ministry was not working smoothly due to internal friction between the ministers of the Marathi-speaking and the Hindi-speaking areas of the Province. There were three ministers from each region and the Premier, Dr N.B. Khare, was from the Marathi-speaking area. The problem started when Mr Shareef, the Minister of Law, released a non-political prisoner, convicted in what was known as the Wardha Rape Case. Dr Khare and the local Congress Committee were inclined to hush up the matter. But on 24 March 1938 there was demonstration outside the Assembly and also commotion inside the chamber. The Congress Working Committee intervened and the discredited minister resigned. In May 1938, the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee prevailed upon Dr Khare not to take any precipitate action against any other minister and to consult the Working Committee before he took action with regard to the reconstitution of his cabinet. In the hill resort of Pachmarhi, the compromise took place in the presence of the Congress president, but the conflict between the two ministerial groups did not end. Rather, it was aggravated and Dr Khare sent a report to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel that he and some of his colleagues had not come to any agreement about some of the items of the Pachmarhi compromise. Patel asked him again not to precipitate the matter as the problem would be discussed and decided upon by the Working Committee scheduled to meet on 23 July 1938.

But the crisis was precipitated on 20 July as Dr Khare, the Premier, and two of his Marathi-speaking colleagues, Gole and Deshmukh, resigned. The other three ministers, Shukla, Mishra and Mehta, who hailed from the Mahakoshal region, refused to resign without consulting the Congress High Command. They got in touch with Rajendra Prasad who was at Wardha on that evening and were told not to resign till a decision was taken by the Working Committee. However, the governor accepted the resignation of the premier and, on the evening of 20 July 1938, dismissed the three ministers who had refused to resign. Early the next morning, at 5 a.m., Dr Khare was invited to form a new ministry. A list was immediately submitted without consulting the party and a new cabinet was sworn in.

The intense political drama on the night of 20–1 July came as a shock and surprise to the Congress High Command. It created a sensation throughout the country. On 22 July the Parliamentary Sub-Committee met at Wardha and discussed the matter in detail. Dr Khare was convinced that he had committed 'a grave error of judgement' in resigning himself and calling upon his colleagues to do so without consulting the

party leaders. He was asked to resign and the letter of resignation which he submitted on 23 July was as follows:

Dear Sir Francis,

Since my resignation and formation of the new cabinet, I have had opportunities of consulting the Congress President and the Parliamentary Sub-Committee. As a result of this consultation I have come to realise that in submitting resignation and forming a new cabinet I have acted hastily and committed an error of judgement. I, therefore, hereby tender resignation on behalf of myself and my colleagues.⁴³

In the evening on 23 July Dr Khare again met the Working Committee and was told to resign from the leadership of the CP Parliamentary Party. He agreed to do so, but insisted that he should be allowed to contest again for the same position. A special meeting of the Congress legislators was summoned at Wardha on 27 July to consider the situation created by the resignation of Dr Khare's ministry and also to elect a new leader. In the meantime Dr Khare, along with the Congress president and some members of the Working Committee, met Gandhi at Shegaon Ashram on the 25 evening. It was proposed that Dr Khare should make a press statement, but he wanted time to consult his friends at Nagpur and said that if by 3 p.m. on the 26 the Working Committee did not hear from him, it must be considered that he was not prepared to issue any statement. At the appointed hour the Working Committee was told that Dr Khare was not prepared to issue the statement in question. Thereupon, a long resolution was adopted by the committee in which it was observed that Dr Khare was not only guilty of grave errors of judgement, but also guilty of gross indiscipline which had exposed the Congress in the CP to ridicule and brought down its prestige. It was concluded that Dr Khare had proved himself unworthy of holding positions of responsibility in the Congress organization. The Working Committee further observed that the Governor of the CP had 'forced the crisis that has overtaken the province, that he was eager to weaken and discredit the Congress in so far as it lay in him to do so.'

On 27 July the meeting of the CP Parliamentary Party was held at Wardha at which the Congress president presided. Dr Khare's resignation was accepted. Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla was elected as the new leader defeating R.M. Deshmukh. On 30 July 1938, the new premier formed a five-member cabinet consisting of (1) Pandit R.S. Shukla — Prime Minister and Home Affairs, (2) Pandit D.P. Mishra — Local Self Government, (3) D.K. Mehta — Finance and Law, (4) S.V. Gokhale — Revenue and Education and (5) C.J. Bharucha — Industries and Public Works.

The Khare incident created a bitter controversy and questions of

parliamentary and constitutional propriety were raised. Dr Khare blamed the Congress High Command, stating that his fall was a result of 'devilish revenge, jealousy and malice'. On 6 August 1938, Gandhi came out with a devastating criticism of Dr Khare's behaviour and the 'indecent' haste shown by the Governor:

In no case could any minister take internal quarrels to the Governor and seek relief through him without the consent of the Working Committee. If the Congress machinery is slow-moving, it can be made to move faster. If the men at the helm are self-seekers or worthless, the All-India Congress Committee is there to remove them.

Concerning the criticism in the press regarding the governor's role in the crisis, Gandhi observed:

Of course, the Governor's action conformed to the letter of the law, but it killed the spirit of the tacit compact between the British Government and the Congress. . . . H.E. the Governor, in his eagerness to discredit the Congress, kept a vigil and brought about a situation which he knew was to be uncomfortable for the Congress. The unwritten compact between the British Government and the Congress is a gentleman's agreement in which both are expected to play the game.⁴⁴

Gandhi further argued that the governors must recognize the Congress as the one national organization that was bound some day or other to replace the British Government. In the UP, Bihar and Orissa the governors waited for the decision of the Congress leadership when a crisis faced them, but the CP governor did not do so. The resolution of the Congress Working Committee, Gandhi said, was a 'friendly warning' to the British Government that if they wished to avoid an open rupture with the Congress, there should not be any repetition of what happened at Nagpur on the night of 20 July.

Regarding the Congress organization Gandhi also made it clear that 'the Congress conceived as a fighting machine has to centralize control and guide every department and every Congressman however highly placed, and expect unquestioned obedience. The fight cannot be fought on any other terms.' Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, felt obliged to issue a statement in reply to virulent propaganda against Gandhi and the Congress High Command:

If one considers the matter dispassionately, he will be forced to define conclusion that no injustice has been done to Dr Khare, nor has he been dealt with too harshly. If one argues that he has been punished too severely, I may point out that a leader has to pay the price of leadership. . . . In no country would a deposed premier have behaved with such supreme lack of dignity and responsibility as the ex-premier of C.P.⁴⁵

The matter was also brought to the Legislative Assembly on 15 September 1938 when the house met for its autumn session. The adjournment motion that had been moved was rejected. On 17 September, Dr Khare made a lengthy speech about his resignation, accusing the Congress High Command, but the new premier only read out Dr Khare's letter of resignation and pointed out that it was a complete answer to his allegations. Subsequently the Congress Working Committee disqualified Dr Khare from Congress membership for the next two years from October 1938. He was even called upon to resign from the CP Legislative Assembly. The whole episode was, no doubt, a very unfortunate one. It revealed how intense group rivalry was even in those days, when office had been accepted only to hasten the ultimate goal — the achievement of Swaraj, but it also demonstrated quite clearly that the High Command was determined to enforce discipline.

(c) Tripuri Session (10–12 March 1939)

After the ministerial crisis in the Central Provinces, another, bigger controversy which shook the Congress Party to its foundations was the election of its next president for the annual session to be held at Tripuri in March 1939. The names of Azad, Bose and Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya were prominently mentioned and it was hoped that two of them would retire, leaving the third to be elected unanimously. The election was to be held on 29 January 1939. On 20 January Azad withdrew from the contest on grounds of health, but suggested Dr Sitaramayya's name for the office. The next day Bose staked his claim for a second term and issued a statement. 'In view of the increasing international tension and the prospective fight over Federation,' he said, 'the new year will be a momentous one in our national history. Owing to this and other reasons, if my services in office are demanded by the majority of the delegates, with what justification can I withdraw from the contest when the issue involved is not a personal one at all'. Thus began a prolonged controversy which was to have far-reaching consequences.

On 24 January, some members of the Working Committee, namely, Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram, J.B. Kripalani, Sankar Rao Deo and Bhulabhai Desai, stated that, when Maulana Azad finally decided to withdraw from the contest, he had advocated Dr Sitaramayya's election in 'consultation with some of us'. They felt that it would be a sound policy to adhere to the rule of not re-electing the same president except under 'very exceptional circumstances'. On the same day Bose replied that it was extremely painful for him to engage in a public controversy. 'In an election contest,' he said, 'one would not expect the other members to take sides in an organised manner, because that would obviously not be fair. . . . If the Presidential election is to be an election worth the name, there should be freedom of voting without

any moral coercion. If the President is to be elected by the delegates and not to be nominated by influential members of the Working Committee, will Sardar Patel and other leaders withdraw their whip and leave it to the delegates to vote as they like?' Bose further alleged that there was a widespread belief among the public that there might be some compromise on the federal scheme between the right wing of the Congress and the British Government. He was prepared to withdraw from the contest if a genuine anti-federationist, like Acharya Narendra Deva, for instance, would be accepted as the president for the coming year.

The election took place on 29 January. Delegates voted at places fixed by the respective PCCs and Subhas Chandra Bose won, polling 1580 votes as against Dr Sitaramayya's 1377.⁴⁶ But the controversy did not end with the election. Two days later Gandhi issued a statement on the matter saying:

Since I was instrumental in inducing Dr Pattabhi not to withdraw his name as a candidate when the Maulana Saheb withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his. And I am nothing, if I do not represent definite principles and policy. Therefore, it is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand. I rejoice in this defeat.⁴⁷

Thus the controversy led to a serious crisis of faith culminating in the resignation of 12 out of 15 members of the Working Committee, nominated by Bose, headed by Patel, Azad and Rajendra Prasad in February 1939. In their letter of resignation to the president, they wrote: 'We feel that the time has come when the country should have a clear-cut policy not based on compromise between different incompatible groups of the Congress. It is but right, therefore, that you should select a homogeneous cabinet, representing the views of the majority.' Nehru's resignation was prefaced with a covering letter which revealed that he had tried his best to bring about a compromise, but did not succeed. Such was the situation in which the 52nd annual session of the Congress was held at Tripuri in the Mahakosal region of the Central Provinces.

Gandhi was not present at this Congress session. The president was very ill, but he nevertheless came to Tripuri, against doctor's advice. His condition did not improve sufficiently to enable him to deliver the presidential address on 10 March 1939. In his absence, it was read by Sarat Bose in English, the Hindustani version being read by Acharya Narendra Deva. Maulana Azad took the chair at the opening session. In his short presidential address, besides expressing a stiffening attitude towards federation, Bose stressed the need to work in close co-operation with all anti-imperialist forces in the country, particularly the kisan and the trade union organizations. 'All the radical elements in the country,' he said, 'must work in close harmony and co-operation and efforts of all

anti-imperialist organisations must converge in the direction of a final assault on British imperialism.' He gave a sort of ultimatum to the British: 'We shall put our demand before the British Government and if it is not conceded within six months, we shall start mass civil disobedience.' In the resolution on 'National Demand', the point was further elaborated and stressed:

The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence for the nation and to have a constitution framed for a free India through a Constituent Assembly, elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other constitutions or attempted solutions of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people. . . . With a view to a speedy realisation of the Congress objective and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead and prepare the country for a nation-wide struggle, this Congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organisation, the Congress Provincial Governments and the people generally, to work to this end by promoting unity and seeking to eliminate disruptive forces and conditions which lead to communal conflicts and national disunity, by co-ordinating the activities of the Provincial Governments with the work outside the legislatures and by strengthening the organisation so as to make it a still more effective organ of the people's will.⁴⁸

The Congress recorded its entire disapproval of British foreign policy, culminating in 'the Munich Pact, Anglo-Italian agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain', as it was one of deliberate betrayal of democracy and the ending of the system of collective security, which had consistently aided the fascist powers and helped in the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress was opposed to imperialism and fascism alike and was convinced that world peace and progress required the ending of both of these. It was urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both imperialism and fascism, and pursuing her path of peace and freedom.

Regarding the internal problem of the party, the main interest centred on the resolution sponsored by Govind Ballabh Pant expressing confidence in the old Working Committee and strongly urging upon the President to nominate the new committee according to Gandhi's wishes. President Bose ruled that the resolution could not be discussed by the AICC, but allowed its discussion in the Subjects Committee where it was passed by a bare majority. On the second day of the session, M.S. Aney moved that, in view of the alarming state of the president's health, the consideration of the resolution on the clarification of the misunderstanding that had arisen out of the presidential election, should be referred to the AICC for disposal at some future date. This proposal was

passed by a clear majority. This was the signal for uproarious scenes. Nehru's voice was drowned in the uproar, but still he persisted in speaking. In a voice faltering and brimming over with feeling, he made a fervent appeal for discipline. Aney withdrew the resolution to help ease the situation. The next day Pant moved the resolution on faith in Gandhi which was seconded by Rajagopalachari. It was passed by an overwhelming majority by show of hands. The Congress thus clarified the position and declared its general policy as follows:

This Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies which have governed its programme in the past years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of opinion that there should be no break in these policies and that they should continue to govern the Congress programme in future. This Congress expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee which functioned during the last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members.

In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that its executive should command his implicit confidence and requests the President to appoint the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.⁴⁹

This resolution paved the way for the exit of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress.

(d) Resignation of the President

Even a month after the Tripuri Congress, the Working Committee could not be formed. A meeting of the All India Congress Committee was held at Calcutta on 29 April to solve the tangle. In response to the pressing invitation of Bose, Gandhi reached Calcutta to attend the meeting. He had written earlier to him that he could not interpret Pandit Pant's resolution. 'I cannot, will not,' he said firmly, 'impose a cabinet on you, nor can I guarantee the approval by the AICC of your cabinet and policy.' However, Bose discussed the matter with him and also with some members of the old Working Committee before the beginning of the AICC session. On 29 April, when the meeting commenced, the president explained to the house how his conversation with Gandhi and others had failed to bring about a settlement. Thereafter he made a statement tendering his resignation. After 'mature deliberation and in an entirely helpful spirit', he said, 'he was placing his resignation in the hands of the AICCs as he was unable to announce the personnel of the new Working Committee. Later on he clarified his position saying:

Serious and critical times are ahead of us. We must pool all our resources and pull our whole weight if we are to emerge triumphant out of the

external crisis that is fast overtaking us. To this arduous task, I shall contribute my humble mite. What does it matter if I am not in the Presidential Chair? My services will be always at the disposal of the Congress and of the country for what they are worth. I claim to have sufficient patriotism and sufficient sense of discipline to be able to work as an ordinary soldier in this great fight for India's political and economic emancipation.⁵⁰

After tendering his resignation Bose requested Sarojini Naidu to preside over the meeting. Nehru placed before the house the proposition that President Bose be requested to withdraw his resignation and nominate afresh the Working Committee which functioned in 1938. Bose did not accept Nehru's proposal and the meeting broke up. On the next day, Bose finally declined to accept Nehru's proposition. Mrs Naidu's appeal to him to reconsider the matter also failed. Thereupon she requested the members to elect a new president. The AICC elected Babu Rajendra Prasad as president for the remaining period of the year. In the third sitting of the AICC on 1 May 1939 Rajendra Prasad, the new president, announced that the old Working Committee would continue with the addition of two members, Dr B.C. Roy and Dr P.C. Ghosh, from Bengal. Sarat Chandra Bose did not agree to serve on the committee. Nehru also declined to serve on it.

On 3 May 1939, Bose announced the formation of a new party within the Congress, to be called the Forward Bloc. Its object was to 'rally all radical and anti-imperialist progressive elements in the country on the basis of a minimum programme, representing the greatest common measure of agreement among the radicals of all shades of opinion'.⁵¹ Thus, Bose now followed an independent policy and chalked out his own strategy to fight against the British power. But this once again landed him in trouble and the Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha in August 1939, resolved that 'for his grave act of indiscipline Shri Subhas Babu is declared disqualified as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and to be a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years from August 1939. The Working Committee trusts that Shri Subhas Babu will see the error of his ways and loyally submit to this disciplinary action.'⁵²

(e) *The Communal Problem*

With the extension of separate electorates and the introduction of provincial autonomy, the communal problem became more acute. The frustration of the Muslim League at not being able to share power with the Congress in provincial administration has been discussed earlier. The Congress had repeatedly declared its policy in regard to the rights of the minorities, which would ensure their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation. Its objective was that, in an independent India, no class, group or commun-

ity would be allowed to exploit another to its own advantage. National unity and mutual co-operation was the goal and this accepted policy was once again reiterated in the resolution of the Working Committee and the AICC at their meetings held in October 1937 in Calcutta. The Congress resolutions on Fundamental Rights included nine important clauses. They were:⁵³

- (i) Every citizen of India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for purpose not opposed to law or morality.
- (ii) Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.
- (iii) The culture, language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.
- (iv) All citizens are equal before law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.
- (v) No disability attaches to any citizen by reason of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.
- (vi) All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State, or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.
- (vii) The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.
- (viii) The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.
- (ix) Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay and settle in any part thereof, to acquire property and to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution or protection in all parts of India.

But in spite of such reiteration of policy, the assumption of power by the Congress without sharing it with the League evoked a sharp reaction in Muslim circles as was evident from Jinnah's address to the 25th Session of All India Muslim League in Lucknow in October 1937. With much bitterness he said:

The present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed the Government in six provinces where they are in majority they have by their words, deeds and programme shown that Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands. Wherever they are in a majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to co-operate with the Muslim League parties and demanded unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges.⁵⁴

He even criticized the Congress attempt to introduce Hindi as the national language, the singing of 'Bande Mataram', and the hoisting of the Congress flag on public buildings. He alleged that, on the very threshold of assuming little power and responsibility, the majority community had acted as if 'Hindustan is for the Hindus'. He warned the members of his community to realize that the time had come when they should concentrate and devote their energies to self-organization and full development of their power to the exclusion of every other consideration. He implored them to rally round one common platform and the flag of the All-India Muslim League.

Jinnah's speech had a tremendous impact on the Muslim leaders who were outside the fold of the Muslim League. Sir Sikander Hyat Khan announced that he was advising all Muslim members of his Unionist Party in the Punjab to join the League. Shortly afterwards, Fazlul Haq and Sir Muhammad Saadulla made similar declarations in Bengal and Assam respectively. The Congress 'mass contact' programme was also counteracted by the mullahs who convinced their co-religionists that their interest could be safeguarded only by the League. The strength of the League, no doubt, increased considerably and in three successive bye-elections in the United Provinces, the League won all the seats. Thus Jinnah succeeded in putting new strength and vitality into his organization and could claim to speak on behalf of whole Muslim community in India. Henceforth, he assumed a pose of intransigence in any negotiations with the Congress and played a reactionary role in Indian politics, which the Congress leaders seemed to have been rather slow to realize, and could not counteract in the larger interest of the country.

The Congress, as usual, continued to lay emphasis on national unity. In the annual session held at Haripura in February 1938, it was observed that the struggle for India's independence was essentially one and indivisible, which could be carried on effectively only on a united national basis. The Congress declared firmly that it regarded it as 'its primary duty and fundamental policy to protect the religious, linguistic, cultural and other rights of the minorities in India so as to ensure for them in any scheme of government to which the Congress is a party, the widest scope for their development and their participation in the fullest measure in the political, economic and cultural life of the nation.'⁵⁵ The appeal had hardly any effect on the Muslim leadership. All efforts made in 1938 to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem proved futile. On 2 August 1938 Jinnah wrote a strongly-worded letter to Subhas Chandra Bose, the Congress President, in which it was claimed that the Muslim League was the only authoritative and representative political organization of the Muslims of India. He insisted that an essential precondition to any agreement between the two organizations was the recognition by the Congress that the Muslim League alone could speak or negotiate on

behalf of the Muslims of India. He even objected to the inclusion of any Muslim in the committee that might be appointed by the Congress for negotiation with the League or the government. Naturally, the Congress could not carry on any negotiations with the Muslim League on these terms and finally, on 16 December 1938, on behalf of the Working Committee, Bose wrote to Jinnah to express his regret that they were not in a position to do anything further in the direction of starting negotiations with the League with a view to arriving at a settlement of the Hindu-Muslim question.⁵⁶

In the meanwhile, the Muslim League directed its energy towards a regular campaign of vilification against the Congress governments for many alleged offences against the Muslim community. In March 1938, a committee, headed by the Raja of Pirpur, was appointed by the League to enquire into Muslim grievances in the Congress-administered provinces. The *Pirpur Report* was published by the end of 1938 and it contained not only a long list of specific charges against the Congress governments, but also a general attack on Congress policy as a whole which it condemned as the tyranny of the majority.

In March 1939 another report was published in Bihar known as *Shareef Report* from the name of its draftsman, S.M. Shareef, who was appointed by the provincial Muslim League to enquire into some grievances of Muslims in the province. It recounted the so-called atrocities perpetrated by the majority community in various places in Bihar. A third report, entitled *Muslim Sufferings under Congress Rule*, was published by Fazlul Haq in December 1939. All these were treated with more or less contempt or ridicule in the national press.

The Congress ministries gave effective replies to the alleged charges but, provoked by persistent allegations, the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad, wrote to Jinnah in October 1939 suggesting an investigation into the charges by an impartial judicial authority. He even suggested the name of Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of the Federal Court, for this purpose. Jinnah, however, did not pay any heed to this proposal. The Muslim League charges roused passions and embittered relations between the two communities. After the resignation of the Congress ministries, the Muslim League observed 22 December 1939 as 'Day of Deliverance' from the tyranny and oppression of the Congress ministries. Thus the communal tangle remained far from resolved as the Second World War started; rather the gulf between the communities had widened.

9. The Declaration of War and Resignation of the Ministries

The Congress was determined to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India and use Indian resources in its pursuit without the consent of the

Indian people. In the Calcutta session of the AICC, held in April 1939, it recorded its complete disapproval of the attempt being made by the British Government to amend the Government of India Act with a view to concentrating all power in the case of a war emergency in the hands of the Central Government. In fact, the Secretary of State for India had initiated a process of discussion with the Indian authorities in January 1939 regarding the amendment of the Government of India Act, 1935, and emergency legislation in the event of a war. The viceroy communicated the matter to all provincial governors and asked them to ascertain the views of the ministries on the proposed amendments. The main one added a new section 126 A which said that when a proclamation of emergency was in operation, 'whereby the Governor-General has declared that the security of India is threatened by war (a) the Centre will possess the power for defence purposes to control, in the interests of co-ordination, provincial action in the provincial field'. At the same time, by means of clause (b), 'the federal legislature, which by virtue of section 102 will possess power under the provisions of the Act as they stand to impose duties on provincial officers in the provincial field, will by virtue of the proposed amendment, secure power, if need arises, to impose duties on the Federal Government and Federal Officers in the field otherwise provincial; but this extension of the Central executive authority may be brought into use only if the Governor-General in his discretion, is satisfied that it is really needed in view of the nature of the emergency.'⁵⁷ These proposals, if accepted, would naturally reduce provincial autonomy to a farce and the provincial governments would become 'helpless agents' of the imperial power.

'Any attempt to impose such an amendment on India,' the Congress resolution firmly declared, 'must and will be resisted in every way open to the Congress. Provincial Governments are warned to be ready to carry out the policy in this respect as may be determined by the AICC or the Working Committee as the case may be.' In August 1939, the Working Committee met at Wardha when the war clouds had gathered menacingly in Europe and its outbreak was imminent. Against the declared policy of the Indian people, troops were sent to Egypt, Singapore and other places and the British Government also further prolonged the life of the Central Assembly by another year. In order to dissociate itself from such decisions of the British authorities and at the same time to enforce the Congress policy, the Working Committee took a firm decision and called upon all Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending its next session. As regards provincial governments, the committee reminded them 'to assist in no way the war preparations of the British Government and to keep in mind the policy laid down by the Congress, to which they must adhere. If the carrying out of this policy leads to the resignations or

removal of the Congress Ministries they must be prepared for this contingency.⁵⁸

Such a contingency came within only two months. With the declaration of the war, India became a belligerent country as a part of the British Empire. But her involvement in the war was without any popular consent. The Congress which had shouldered the responsibility of administering several provinces was not consulted at all. The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha from 8 to 15 September for a prolonged discussion of this serious issue. Besides the members of the Working Committee, Gandhi, Nehru, Bose, M.S. Aney, Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash Narayan were also present by special invitation. After earnest consideration of the grave crisis, the Working Committee issued a long and comprehensive statement on 14 September elaborating the Indian point of view in clear and categorical terms. The Congress had repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war, violence and suppression of the human spirit. At the same time, the Working Committee stressed that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people themselves. No outside authority should impose the decision on them and be permitted to exploit their resources for imperialist ends. India could not associate herself with a war said to be fought for safeguarding democratic freedom when that very freedom was denied to her. If Great Britain fought for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her possessions and establish full democracy in India. A free and democratic India would gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against fascist aggression. The most effective part of the resolution read as follows: 'The Working Committee therefore invite the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present.'⁵⁹ The All India Congress Committee met at Wardha on 9 and 10 October and endorsed the views of the Working Committee on the war crisis. It further demanded that 'India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent.'

Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy, issued a statement on 17 October 1939. He pointed out that the goal of the British policy was the grant of dominion status, but for the present the constitutional set-up was to remain unchanged. It would be open to modification only after the war, in which the interests of minorities would be given full weightage. In order to associate Indian public opinion with the prosecution of the war, he proposed the establishment of a consultative group, representing all

major political parties in British India and the Indian princes, over which the governor-general himself would preside.

The Working Committee met at Wardha on 22 October 1939 and for two days considered the viceroy's declaration about British war aims. It sharply reacted to the policy enunciated by the British authorities and regarded it 'wholly unsatisfactory':

The Viceregal statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy The Committee must, therefore, regard the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate. In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Committee call upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations.'⁶⁰

The Parliamentary Sub-committee, with the approval of the Working Committee, issued instructions for the guidance of ministries in the Congress provinces. They were required to tender resignations after the disposal by the respective legislatures of any urgent pending business. It was expected that resignations would be tendered by 31 October 1939. Speakers, deputy speakers and members of the assemblies, presidents and members of the councils were not required to resign their offices and seats.

With the mandate from the High Command of the Congress, the provincial ministries prepared to resign. Some provincial assemblies were already in session as in UP, Bombay and Bihar; some others were summoned to meet in the first week of November and in some cases special sessions were called to move the resolution on war. Similarly worded resolutions were moved in the legislatures of all Congress provinces by the respective premiers. The resolution ran as follows:

This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further, in complete disregard of Indian opinion, passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of Provincial Governments.

This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential, in order to secure the co-operation of the Indian people, that principles of democracy should be applied to India and her policy should be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution, and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to the present governance of India, including arrange-

ments whereby all war measures in this province may be undertaken with the consent of and executed through the Provincial Government.

This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India.⁶¹

In all the provinces, except Assam, the war resolution was passed by large majorities. In the legislatures of Bihar, Orissa and the North-West Frontier Province, the resolution was adopted without any modification or amendment. In the legislatures of Bombay, Madras, the United Provinces and the Central Provinces, the resolution was passed with slight amendments acceptable to the Congress Party. Those accepted amendments related to providing effective safeguards to Muslims and other minority communities. The legislators in Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces, while adopting the war resolution, also recorded fullest confidence in their respective ministries and at the same time called upon them to tender their resignations. By 10 November 1939 all Congress ministries, except that of Assam, were out of office. On 17 November, the Assam Ministry's resignation was accepted and an alternative government was formed. In the other seven Congress provinces, the governor's rule under Section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935 was promulgated.

Thus ended the administration of the first Congress ministries in eight Indian provinces. 'The resignation of the ministries demonstrated,' the Congress general secretary's report observed, 'to all those who had any doubts that Congress was not out for power and office but for the emancipation of the people of India from foreign yoke. . . . The Congress rose to its revolutionary height. It refused to allow small ameliorative reforms to stand in the way of the march of the country to its goal of Purna Swaraj.'⁶²

The Congress Ministries held the reins of office for about 28 months. In the midst of their struggle with the British authorities, they had accepted office and became administrators. The ministers had had little or no previous experience of administration, but most of them proved capable and hard-working men with a high sense of public duty and responsibility. They tried their best to bring to the statute book as many laws as possible for the benefit of the common people. Their success could not be spectacular, primarily due to paucity of funds and factors like chronic floods, mass illiteracy, etc. The British authorities also created constitutional crises from time to time, but the ministries faced them boldly and succeeded in tiding over the difficulties. Their achievements in the field of social and constructive reforms were most remarkable. Upliftment of Harijans, prohibition, basic education, etc. were initiated with high hopes but adequate time and enough funds were

needed to reap the full benefits from those projects. A brief account of the benefits in terms of cash value to the people in the Congress provinces is provided below from the annual report of the general secretary of the party for the year 1939/40.⁶³

BENEFITS OF CONGRESS GOVERNMENTS

	<i>Cash Value per annum</i>
Madras	
Prohibition (Loss to Govt. Rs 65,00,000)	Rs 2,60,00,000
Land Revenue Remission 1938-9	Rs 7,14,000
Potentially estimated gain to Agricultural debtors (Debt Relief Act)	Rs 50,00,00,000
Arrears written off (under the Debt Relief Act)	Rs 3,00,00,000
Harijan Uplift — 1937-8	Rs 8,35,600
1938-9	Rs 9,38,300
1939-40	Rs 10,05,130
Bombay	
1. Prohibition (Govt. loss Rs 1,80,00,000)	Rs 5,00,00,000
2. As a result of the recommendation of the Textile Inquiry Committee adopted by the Congress Government	Rs 95,00,000
3. Amendment of the Land Revenue Code	Rs 30,00,000
4. Debt Redemption Bill	30 to 40 crores of Rupees (non- recurring).
United Provinces	
Land Revenue: Remission in revenue,	
(1) to Landlords	Rs 3,57,00,000
(2) to Tenants	Rs 10,71,00,000
Remission of Stayed Arrears Act	Rs 9,00,00,000
Prohibition	Rs 1,00,00,000
Sugarcane Control:	
(1) 1938-9	Rs 2,00,00,000
(2) 1939-40	Rs 6,00,00,000
Orissa	
1. Orissa Tenancy Act	Rs 4,00,000
2. The Madras Estates Land Act Amendment Bill (awaiting the Viceroy's Act)	Rs 10,00,000
3. Water rate in North Orissa under the Mahanadi system was reduced by 25 per cent as a permanent measure from 1938. The canal irrigation system was extended.	

4. Grazing fee was reduced in all Government forests by 50 per cent. New conveniences were made available in South Orissa.
5. Labour: The system of unpaid labour and *rasad* were abolished. The Orissa Money-Lenders' Act was passed by which, among other things, no moneylender could recover more than an equal amount of the principal as interest.
6. The Orissa court fees Act was passed which reduced scales of court fees in South Orissa.
7. Prohibition of Opium was introduced in the district of Balasore.

Assam

1. Grant of 25 per cent to 31¼ per cent remission in the land revenue assessment for 1938-9 Rs 28,00,000
(non-recurring)
2. Flood Relief operations Rs 8,00,000
3. Educational grant Rs 2,80,000
4. 1939-40 remission Rs 42,00,000
5. Prohibition: Total prohibition of opium was introduced in Dibrugarh and Sibsagarh Sub-divisions from 15 April 1939. The experiment was welcomed with enthusiasm, many voluntary agencies sprang up to push forward the campaign. A large number of treatment centres and temporary hospitals were opened where the addicts were treated by trained doctors. About 10,000 registered and over 5,000 unregistered addicts were cured of the opium habit. Loss of revenue from the sale of opium was estimated at Rs 4,50,000 and the cost of the campaign at Rs 1,00,000.

Bihar

- Tenancy Legislation Rs 2,50,00,000
- The Bihar Sugar Factories Control Act (Peasantry benefits to the extent of Rs 2½ crores)
- Prohibition (loss of Revenue Rs 20 lakhs) Rs 60,00,000
- Debt legislation: Under the Bihar Money Lenders' Act maximum rates of interest were fixed at 9 per cent per annum in case of secured and 12 per cent per annum in case of unsecured debts, subject to the proviso that in no case would the interest paid exceed the principal.

Central Provinces

- Relief in Land Taxes Rs 11,87,170
- Textile Labour Rs 5,00,000
- Prohibition (loss of 9 lakhs to Govt) Rs 27,00,000
- Reduction in grazing, etc Rs 1,18,000
- Irrigation rates Rs 2,00,000
- Debt conciliation upto March 1939 Rs 5,83,00,000

By 1939 the Indian National Congress had emerged as a constructive force in Indian politics with a genuine zeal for social and economic

reform. A new spirit of public service animated them to take prompt, and, if necessary, radical action which displayed democratic self-government at its best. Provincial autonomy gave wide scope to the legislatures in guiding the destinies of the people. All problems of the provinces could be discussed and debated on the floor of the assemblies and popularly elected ministries were expected to find satisfactory solutions for those issues. The legislatures were well-conducted, hard-working and businesslike. In most of them, the opposition was numerically weak and lacked cohesion. However, all problems were finally settled by the legislative chambers only after proper deliberation. The Congress legislators were disciplined partymen and, in spite of some inner conflicts, they did not betray the leadership on the floor of house. On the whole, the debates and discussions in the popularly elected legislative chambers generated a new sense of self-confidence in the minds of the people and that boosted their morale for greater participation in the freedom struggle for reaching the ultimate goal — Purna Swaraj.

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Chapter III

Socialist Stirrings within the Congress (1934-40)

Atul Chandra Pradhan

1. Three Lines of Activity in 1934

AFTER THE SUSPENSION of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1934, the activities of Congressmen were directed in three directions: implementing the Constructive Programme, entry into the legislatures, and formulating a socialist ideology — each pursued by a separate section of the organization.

Mahatma Gandhi and his devoted followers turned to the implementation of the Constructive Programme, i.e., removal of untouchability, promotion of khadi and gramodyog (village industries). The annual session of the Congress, held in October 1934 at Bombay, passed the following resolution on the promotion of village industries:

Whereas the aim of the Congress has been, from its inception, the progressive identification with the masses and whereas the village reorganisation and reconstruction is one of the items in the constructive programme of the Congress, and whereas such reconstruction necessarily implies the revival and encouragement of dead or dying village industries besides the central industry of spinning, and whereas this work, like the reorganisation of spinning, is possible only through concentrated and special effort, unaffected by and independent of the political activities of Congress, Shri J.C. Kumarappa is hereby authorized to form under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, an association called the All-India Village Industries Association as part of the activities of the Congress. The said association shall work for the revival and encouragement of the said industries and for the moral and physical advancement of the villages, and shall have power to frame its own constitution, to raise funds, and to perform such acts as may be necessary for the fulfilment of its objects.¹

In pursuance of this resolution, the All-India Village Industries Association was inaugurated at Wardha on 14 December 1934 in a building donated by Jamnalal Bajaj. This association was 'a self-acting, independent and non-political organization, consisting of men and women

whose primary aim in life would be identification with the villagers and promotion of their welfare'. It was to be run by a board of management holding office for a period of three years, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. The first board of management consisted of Shrikrishnadas Jajoo (President and Treasurer), J.C. Kumarappa (Organizer and Secretary), Shrimati Gosiben Captain, Dr Khan Saheb, Shoorji Vallabhdas, Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghose, Laxmidas Purushottam and Shankarlal Banker. Besides the board of management, the organization consisted of members, agents, honorary workers, paid whole-time workers, associates and a board of advisers. The board of advisers included many prominent personalities, such as poet Rabindranath Tagore, scientists like Sir J.C. Bose, Sir P.C. Ray and Sir C.V. Raman, the industrialist Seth Ghanashyamdas Birla, medical scientists like Dr Jivaraj Mehta, Dr M.A. Ansari and Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and others.

Another section of Congressmen decided to enter the legislatures as did the old Swarajist organization of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. The All India Congress Committee, in its meeting held at Patna on 19 May 1934, appointed a Parliamentary Board to execute the Congress Party's council-entry programme. This council-entry programme was wholeheartedly supported by Gandhi, though in 1924 he had opposed the council-entry programme of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru. Left wing Congressmen criticized the new council-entry programme on the ground that it would result in the conversion of the Congress from a revolutionary organization into a constitutional one. Gandhi replied to such critics that the idea behind going to the legislatures was to raise a voice against the constitutional White Paper, to demand a constituent assembly and the repeal of repressive laws and to carry on the Constructive Programme and 'other national activities of the Congress to the extent opportunities were available'.² The election manifesto of the Congress Parliamentary Board for the election to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934, drafted by Gandhi himself, pledged itself to the rejection of the White Paper (including the Communal Award), convening of a constituent assembly on the basis of adult suffrage, and implementation of the fundamental rights and economic programme, contained in the Karachi Congress resolution.³

In sharp contrast to the first two lines of activity, a new socialist school of thought and action was coming to the forefront in the Congress organization. There was a 'cry of socialism all round among the youth of the country'.⁴ Critical of Gandhi's emphasis on truth and non-violence and khadi and village industries and support of the council-entry programme, the socialists aimed at the establishment of a socialist state through class struggle on the basis of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, and on the model of Soviet Russia, subject to modifications called for in Indian conditions.

2. Attempts to give Congress Leftist Orientation

During the twenties, the success of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, the teachings of M.N. Roy and the growth of the trade union movement had created within and outside the Congress organization a receptivity for socialistic ideas. By 1934, a number of prominent Congressmen, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Sampurnananda, Jayaprakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Deva were subscribing to the leftist line of thinking. In 1929 Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the All-India Trade Union Congress session held at Nagpur. A few weeks after this, he presided over the annual session of the National Congress at Lahore. Presiding over both the National Congress and the Trade Union Congress within a few weeks, Nehru had hoped to be 'a link between the two, and bring them closer to each other — the National Congress to become more socialistic, more proletarian and organised labour to join the national struggle'.⁵ In his presidential address to the Lahore Congress, Nehru frankly expressed his commitment to socialism:

I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican, and am no believer in kings and princes, or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old and whose methods are as predatory as those of the old feudal aristocracy.⁶

The resolution of the Karachi Congress of 1931 on Fundamental Rights and Economic Programme was an indication of the attempts being made to give the Congress a leftist orientation. The resolution said: 'The state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport.'⁷

By the middle of 1933, radical elements of the Congress had started seriously thinking of the leftist orientation of the organization. Following the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement by Gandhi in 1933, Subhas Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai J. Patel, had issued the following statement from Vienna on 9 May 1933:

The latest action of Mahatma Gandhi in suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement is a confession of failure as far as the present method of the Congress is concerned. We are clearly of opinion that as a political leader Mahatma Gandhi has failed. The time has, therefore, come for a radical reorganisation of the Congress on a new principle and with a new method. For bringing about this reorganisation a change of leadership is necessary, for it would be unfair to Mahatma Gandhi to expect him to evolve or work a programme and method not consistent with his lifelong principles. If the Congress as a whole can undergo this transformation, it would be the best course. Failing that a new party will have to be formed within the Congress, composed of all radical elements.⁸

In his letter to Gandhi, dated 13 September 1933, Nehru urged the need for a mass movement, not only for the overthrow of British rule but also of the princely states, landlordism and capitalism:

If we are to improve the condition of the masses, to raise them economically and give them freedom, it is inevitable that vested interests in India will have to give up their special position and many of their privileges. . . . The problem of achieving freedom becomes one of revising vested interests in favour of the masses. To the extent this is done, to that extent only will freedom come. The biggest vested interest in India is that of the British Government; next come the Indian princes; and others follow. We do not wish to injure any class or group and the divesting should be done as gently as possible and with every effort to avoid injury. But it is obvious that the divesting is bound to cause loss to the classes or groups which enjoy special privileges at the expense of the masses. It is also obvious that the process of divesting must be as speedy as possible to bring relief to the masses whose condition, as you know, is as bad as it can well be. Indeed economic forces themselves are acting with amazing rapidity today and breaking up the old order. The big *Zamindari* and *Taluqdari* system in United Provinces has largely collapsed, though it may be kept up for some time longer by outside agencies. Even the conditions of the Zamindars is very bad and the peasantry of course are in a far worse position.⁹

In a mammoth gathering held on Azad Maidan, Delhi, on 12 December 1933, Nehru described the princes, landlords and capitalists as the allies of the British Government and gave a call to the people to simultaneously overthrow the British Government as well as these orders, whose interests, according to him, were tied up with those of the British Government.¹⁰ Nehru had developed great fascination for socialism by 1934. A pamphlet, published by the Publicity Department of the Government of the United Provinces in 1934, described him as 'a highpriest of Communism in India'.¹¹

Nehru's *Autobiography*, written during the period from June 1934 to February 1935, shows to what extent he had ideologically moved away from Gandhi, though still having the highest regard for the latter's commanding personality. Gandhi did not want to abolish the princely order, zamindari system and capitalism. He wanted to transform these orders. He held that the princes, landlords and capitalists, instead of thinking of themselves as the owners of states, estates and industries, should be the trustees for the subjects, tenants and workers. Nehru challenged the validity of Gandhi's trusteeship theory in these words:

With all his [Gandhi's] keen intellect and passion for bettering the down-trodden and oppressed, why does he support a system, and a system which is obviously decaying, which creates this misery and waste? He seeks a way out, it is true, but is not that way to the past barred and

bolted? And meanwhile he blesses all the relics of the old order which stand as obstacles in the way of advance — the feudal states, the big *zamindaris* and *taluqdaris*, the present capitalist system. Is it reasonable to believe in the theory of trusteeship — to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good? Are the best of us so perfect as to be trusted in this way? Even Plato's philosopher-kings could hardly have borne this burden worthily. And it is good for the others to have even these benevolent supermen over them? But there are no supermen or philosopher-kings; there are only frail human beings who cannot help thinking that their own personal good or the advancement of their own idea is identical with the public good. The snobbery of birth, position and economic power is perpetuated and the consequences in many ways are disastrous.¹²

Nehru described 'the *Khadi* movement, hand-spinning and hand-weaving' as 'an intensification of individualism in production', and 'a throw-back to the pre-industrial age'. 'As a solution of any vital present day problem,' he wrote, 'it cannot be taken seriously, and it produces a mentality which may become an obstacle to growth in the right direction'.¹³

Nehru also criticized the parliamentary programme of the Congress party, which had been wholeheartedly supported by Gandhi. He held that this programme would accommodate 'politically and socially reactionary elements', and widen 'the breach between the Congress leadership and the masses'.¹⁴

Nehru had been deeply impressed by the Russian experiment in communism. He saw communism and fascism as the major tendencies of the age and expressed his preference for communism, although he could not completely get out of the humanist liberal tradition of the nineteenth century and disliked communist dogmatism, regimentation and heresy hunts.¹⁵

Though socialism had an intellectual and emotional appeal for the promising leaders and the youth of the country, its implementation was not an easy task. Difficulties were insuperable. Implementation of a socialistic programme was impossible without the state power. So long as British rule existed, the primary need was its overthrow; socialism would follow next. Congress, though bourgeois in outlook and character, represented 'the only effective revolutionary force in the country'. It was a 'united front', consisting of rightists as well as leftists. The emergence of an effective leftist force might have led to split in the organization and damaged its national character. There was a view that socialistic trends among the Congress youth were throwing 'the capitalists and feudal elements more and more helplessly into the hands of the foreign rulers'.¹⁶ Communal forces were distracting the minds of the people and hampering the growth of socialistic ideas. Both Muslim and Hindu

communalists opposed the socialistic movements. The bourgeois leaders among both the communities 'succeeded, in the sacred name of religion, in getting a measure of mass sympathy and support for programmes and demands which had absolutely nothing to do with the masses, or even the lower middle class'.¹⁷

Within the Congress organization the members of the Working Committee were critical and intolerant of the socialistic propaganda of Nehru. Some of his colleagues, as he wrote in his autobiography, challenged his freedom to carry on socialistic propaganda. The vested interests in the country were also opposed to the socialistic propaganda of Nehru and others.¹⁸

In spite of such difficulties some leftist Congressmen endeavoured to form socialist associations. As early as July 1931, in Bihar, Jayaprakash Narayan, Phulan Prasad Varma and Rahul Sankritayan formed the Bihar Socialist Party with the object of establishing a socialist state in which there would be no private property and individual ownership of land and capital. Similar groups were established by Sampurnananda, Paripurnananda, Kamalapati Tripathi and Tarapada Bhattacharjee in UP, and by Yusuf Meherally, M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya in Bombay. In the Punjab, a section of the anti-communalist nationalist organization, called the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, formed the Punjab Socialist Party.

In 1933, in the Nasik Jail, a number of young socialists, such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, Ashok Mehta, S.M. Joshi and M.L. Dantwala, floated the idea of forming an all-India socialist organization within the Congress party. Early in April 1934, Sampurnananda, a member of the All India Congress Committee, published a pamphlet entitled *A Tentative Socialist Programme for India*, in Banaras, in which he stressed the need for an all-India socialist party as a wing of the National Congress to counteract 'the capitalists and upper bourgeoisie' who were 'actively engaged in entrenching themselves behind various pseudo-national organisations'. His programme which, he hoped, the socialists would push through, if and when they attained power, envisaged abolition of zamindari, state ownership of land and nationalization of industries and banks and fixation of minimum and maximum wage etc.¹⁹

The drift of a section of Congressmen to council-entry in 1934 impelled the socialists to form a separate organization so as to prevent the erosion of the revolutionary character of the Congress by the constitutionalist and reformist activities of the parliamentary wing. The first All-India Socialists' Conference was held at the Anjuman-i-Islamia Hall at Patna on 17 May 1934 under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva. In his presidential address, Narendra Deva criticized the forma-

tion of the new Swarajist party (Parliamentary wing of the Congress) as an autonomous body because he thought that, deprived of the healthy influences of the Congress, it would develop into 'a pucca constitutional and reformist body' and run counter to the revolutionary character of Congress. He alleged that the new Swarajist party had no plan of offering obstruction like the old Swarajist party of C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru.²⁰ Narendra Deva stated that the socialists would carry on their agitation within the Congress for the adoption of their economic programme which aimed at the socialization of the nationalist struggle.²¹ This conference appealed to the Congress to adopt a programme, 'socialist in action and objective' so as to ensure the economic freedom of the starving millions.²² In the subsequent months the Congress Socialists sought to clarify their ideological stand as distinguished from the ideology of the Congress under Gandhi's leadership. Jayaprakash Narayan, as the organizing secretary, campaigned in different parts of the country to organize the provincial wings of the Congress Socialist Party.

The Congress Socialists derived their ideas from Marxism-Leninism and believed in the Marxist theory of class struggle. They stood for the socialization of the means of production and transfer of power to the producing masses. They sought to achieve their goal by legitimate and peaceful means, but they did not subscribe to Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence. They wanted to organize the workers and peasants for carrying on a revolutionary mass movement. They considered the independence of the country the immediate necessity. Hence they did not want to break away from the Congress and accepted the Congress leadership. Pending the attainment of independence from the foreign rule, the Congress Socialists wanted to organize the workers and peasants for participation in the nationalist movement as well as for the fulfilment of their economic demands.²³ The Congress Socialist Party tried to play two roles simultaneously — it wanted to struggle against the British and it wanted to fight against capitalists, landlords and princes who were considered to be the forces of reaction. The party also endeavoured to give leadership to the nationalist movement because some of their leaders held that the capitalist class in India was not capable of leading the bourgeois democratic revolution and that capitalism had long ago ceased to be a revolutionary force.²⁴ Jayaprakash Narayan held that if the capitalists and the upper classes led the nationalist movement, they would not give up their vested interests, when the movement culminated in the independence of the country and they would be at the helm of affairs.²⁵

The Congress Working Committee which mostly consisted of right-wing politicians took serious note of the programme and propaganda of the Congress Socialists. By a resolution, adopted on 17 June 1934, the Congress Working Committee denounced 'loose talk' about confiscation

of property and the necessity of a class war. The resolution sought to make it clear that the resolution of the Karachi Congress, as finally adopted by the AICC at Bombay in August 1931, did not contemplate the confiscation of private property or class war and that confiscation of private property and class war were opposed to the Congress principle of non-violence.²⁶ So far as Gandhi was concerned, even though he welcomed the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, he deprecated their 'frequent and unwarranted' attacks on the Congress executive. At Banaras, on 27 July 1934, he told the socialist delegation, which complained to him that the Congress programme fell far short of the socialists' demand, that the socialists should either be prepared to abide by the Congress decisions without attempting to create unnecessary splits in the body or take over charge of the Congress machinery, including its executive.²⁷

Gandhi did not approve of the doctrine of socialism, based on Marxism-Leninism. Socialism and communism of the West, Gandhi held, were based on conceptions 'fundamentally different from ours'. According to him, while Western socialism and communism were based on the conception that man was essentially selfish and that, therefore, without violence a transition to socialism was impossible. Hinduism was based on the conception that man could rise superior to passion and selfishness in response to the call of spirit. Therefore, Gandhi did not believe in the inevitability of class war and regarded class war as 'foreign to the essential genius of India which is capable of evolving a form of communism, broad-based on the fundamental rights of all and equal justice to all'. 'The *Ramarajya* of my dream,' Gandhi held, 'ensures the rights alike of prince and pauper.' Indian socialism, Gandhi pointed out, should 'be based on non-violence and on the harmonious co-operation of labour and capital and the landlord and the tenant'.²⁸ Instead of overthrowing princely rule, zamindari and capitalism, he stood for their 'reformation and modification in consonance with the true spirit of democracy'.²⁹ In a meeting of the Congress Socialists, held at Ahmedabad on 30 June 1934, Gandhi held that if class struggle implied violence, it was against the Congress creed, and that he would have no objection to a non-violent class struggle.³⁰ Unlike the Congress Socialists, Gandhi was not in favour of all large industries being taken over by the state. He held that the economic system should be elastic enough to allow an intelligent and expert individual to organize an industry without much remuneration and only for the good of society.³¹

Gandhi took exception to the name 'Congress Socialist Party' as the Congress had not authorized its formation as part of the Congress organization. He regarded the socialists' refusal to enter into negotiation with the British Government on constitutional issues as a negation of the

principle of non-violence. Gandhi regarded the unqualified right of the workers and peasants to strike as 'too dangerous for a sober, non-violent programme'. He also took exception to the glaring omission of removal of untouchability, communal unity, khaddar and prohibition in the programme of the Congress Socialist Party. Gandhi considered the socialists to be impractical in their approach, and asked them to present practical socialism in keeping with the Indian conditions instead of so-called 'scientific socialism'.³² The Congress Socialists had no fascination for Gandhi's stress on village industries, as they derived their ideological inspiration from Marxism which had been propounded in the context of modern industrial capitalism. M.R. Masani held that though the Congress Socialists regarded Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's advice to go to the peasants as sound, yet they would not go to the peasants with the *charkha* as a symbol but with the tractor which had revolutionized life in Soviet Russia.³³

Gandhi had become aware of his ideological differences with the socialists and the latter's growing influence and importance in the Congress organization. He did not want to impose his views on the socialists. While welcoming their rise, he preferred to retire from the Congress. 'If they [Socialists] gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may,' Gandhi said in his press statement of 17 September 1934, 'I cannot remain in the Congress. For me to be in active opposition would be unthinkable.'³⁴

3. The Congress Socialist Party and its Programme

The first annual session of the Congress Socialist Party was held at Bombay on 21 and 22 October 1934 under the presidentship of Sampurnananda. It was attended by about 150 delegates from 13 provinces. In this session the Congress Socialist Party elected the following persons as the members of party's National Executive: Jayaprakash Narayan (The General Secretary), and M.R. Masani, Mohanlal Gautam, N.G. Gore and E.M.S. Namboodripad (Joint Secretaries) and Narendra Deva, Sampurnananda, Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Purushottam Tricumdas, P.V. Deshpande, Rammanohar Lohia, S.M. Joshi, Amarendra Prasad Mitra, Charles Mascarenas, Nabakrishna Chowdhury and Achyut Patwardhan (members).

This session adopted the constitution of the party. The constitution provided that the Executive Committee of the party was to be elected by its Annual Conference which would consist of the delegates from the provincial branches. Only members of the Indian National Congress who were also members of a provincial Congress Socialist Party, affiliated to the All-India Congress Socialist Party, and not members of any communal party or any party whose principles were inconsistent with

those of the Congress Socialist Party, were eligible to be the members of the party.

The constitution outlined the following plan of action to be followed by the party:

1. Work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure its acceptance of the object and programme of the party.
2. Organization of and entry into peasant and labour unions and entering such unions where they exist, for the purpose of participating in the day to day economic struggles of peasants and workers and of creating a powerful mass movement for the achievement of Independence and Socialism.
3. Organization of and participation in youth leagues, women's organizations, volunteer organizations, etc., for the purpose of getting their support to the programme of the party.
4. Active opposition to all imperialist wars and the utilisation of such and other crises for the intensification of the national struggle.
5. Refusal to enter at any stage into negotiations on the constitutional issue with the British Government.³⁵

This conference defined the socialistic concept of independence: 'Independence must mean the establishment of an independent state wherein power is transferred to the producing masses and such an objective involves refusal to compromise at any stage with British Imperialism.' The conference adopted the following programme as the basis of the future Constitution of India: transfer of all power to the producing masses; the development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the state; the socialization of the key and principal industries, e.g. steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, mines, banks and public utilities; the organization of co-operatives for the production, distribution and credit in the unsocialized section of the economic life; state monopoly of foreign trade; the elimination of the princes and landlords and all other classes of exploiters; the redistribution of land to peasants; the encouragement and promotion of co-operative farming with a view to ultimate collectivization of all agriculture in the country; the liquidation of debts owed by the peasants and workers; the state to provide work to every able-bodied adult and social insurance against unemployment, old age, sickness, accident and maternity; 'to every one according to his needs' to be the ultimate basis of distribution of economic goods; adult franchise on a functional basis; and abolition of discrimination on the basis of distinctions of religion, caste, community and sex.³⁶

The conference also resolved to organize workers, peasants and other exploited classes for the immediate realization of the following demands: freedom of speech and press; freedom of association and combination; repeal of anti-national and anti-labour laws; release of all

political prisoners and prisoners detained without trial; the reinstatement of all farmers and peasants deprived of their lands owing to their participation in the movement for national independence; free and compulsory primary education and liquidation of adult illiteracy; drastic reduction by at least 50 per cent in the military expenditure of the Government of India; municipalization of public utilities; control of usury direct and indirect; a steeply graduated tax on all incomes including incomes from agricultural sources above a fixed minimum; graduated death duties; freedom from serfdom; right to form unions, to strike and to picket; compulsory recognition by employers of the workers' union; a living wage; 40 hours' work a week and healthy quarters and condition of work; equal wages for equal work; weekly payment of wages where demanded; insurance against unemployment, sickness, accident, old age etc.; one month's leave every year with full pay to all workers and two months' leave with pay to woman workers during maternity; provision against employment of children of school-going age in factories and women and children in underground mining and hazardous occupations; elimination of landlordism in zamindari and talukdari areas; abolition of all feudal and semi-feudal levies on the peasantry; encouragement of co-operative farming; introduction of scientific agriculture; liquidation of agricultural indebtedness; establishment of land mortgage banks to grant cheap credit to the peasants; complete exemption from rents and taxes of all peasants with uneconomic holdings; substantial reduction of rent and land revenue; and freedom from attachment in the execution of rent or money decrees of homestead, agricultural resources and that portion of peasant's holding which was just sufficient to maintain an average peasant's family.³⁷

Keeping in view the international situation and the possibility of outbreak of war in the near future, the All India Congress Socialist Conference called upon the National Congress to declare its opposition to participation by India in any war in which the British Government might be involved.³⁸

About the parliamentary activities of the Congress in the legislatures, the Congress Socialist Conference resolved that these must be guided by the single criterion of the economic and political emancipation of the masses and that no Congress representative should accept ministerial office. 'The acceptance of ministerial offices', it was pointed out in the resolution, 'will create a dangerous illusion that the Imperialistic State Machine can be utilised for the good of the masses, while its essential structure is so designed as to automatically result in their exploitation.'³⁹ Already in a meeting, held at Banaras on 1 October 1934, leading Congress Socialists had resolved to neither contest for any seat in the legislatures nor hold any office in the Congress party.⁴⁰

The Congress Socialist Party drew sympathy from the leftists in the

Congress, but from the right-wing Congressmen and extreme leftists it drew scathing criticism. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose were in sympathy with it, though neither of them joined it. In a meeting of students, held at Bombay on 24 July 1934, M.R. Masani said that Jawaharlal was responsible for the formation of the Congress Socialist Party more than any one else in India and that he had been consulted before its formation and had given his blessings to it.⁴¹ Subhas Chandra Bose welcomed the formation of the Congress Socialist Party as 'a legitimate and natural reaction' against the Congress party's move towards the right through the adoption of a parliamentary policy, and as an indication of the revolutionary and dynamic character of the Congress organization. Bose wanted the Congress Socialist Party to be more militant and assertive. He held that instead of supporting the idea of a constituent assembly where they might form a minority, the Congress Socialist Party should claim the exclusive right to draft a constitution for India.⁴²

Right-wing Congressmen criticized the Congress Socialist Party. Sardar Patel ridiculed the Congress Socialists as indulging in 'foolish talk'.⁴³ He told them: 'It is no use clarifying your ideology at present. We will discuss this question, when we get swaraj.'⁴⁴ Bhulabhai Desai, the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Central Legislative Assembly, alleged that the Congress Socialists, by their talk of class struggle, were weakening the Congress organization and were retarding the country's progress towards independence.⁴⁵

Though the Congress Socialist Party was critical of the Congress right-wing, the party was keen on averting a split in the Congress organization. In a circular, dated 16 January 1935, to the party members, Jayaprakash Narayan wrote:

We should always keep in mind the fact that the Congress Socialist Movement claims to be the vanguard of the independence movement. All our activities, therefore, should be such as justify and further this claim. . . . Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right wing.

Nothing can be worse than adopting such tactics as may divide the Congress into two hostile camps: Socialists and anti-socialists. . . .

In the same circular Jayaprakash Narayan called upon the Congress Socialists not to isolate themselves from the Congress and advised them to take part in such activities of the Congress as enrolment of members, the campaign in favour of the Karachi resolution, the celebration of independence day, propaganda against the Joint Parliamentary Committee's report and agitation regarding the constituent assembly.⁴⁶ This

view of Jayaprakash Narayan was not shared by Sampurnananda. The latter propounded the thesis that the Congress Socialists should play the role of official opposition in the Congress and 'while concentrating on the organisation of labour and the peasantry, leave no stone unturned to expose the follies and reactionary policies of the Congress High Command'.⁴⁷

By the close of 1934, elections to the Central Legislative Assembly had been completed. In 1935 and 1936 Congressmen were working mainly in two directions. On the one side, the parliamentary wing was active in the Central Legislature. On the other, the Congress Socialist Party was drawing to itself the young and radical elements. Since the Communist Party of India had been declared illegal, the party instructed its members to join the Congress Socialist Party and utilize the latter's platform. Though both the Communist Party of India and the Congress Socialist Party drew their inspiration from Marxism-Leninism, yet the Government of India was not inclined to treat the Congress Socialist Party on the same footing as the Communist Party of India because of the fear that they might unite.⁴⁸ The basic difference between the Congress Socialists and Communists lay in the fact that, while the former had grown out of the Congress and owed allegiance to it, the latter owed allegiance to the Communist International. Though out of strategic considerations the Communists joined the Congress Socialist Party, the former branded the latter as 'Social Fascists' and described their ideology as 'fake socialism'.

In his circular of 16 January 1935, Jayaprakash Narayan outlined three lines of activity to be pursued by the Congress Socialists: propaganda among the Congress rank and file, organizational work among the workers, and organizational work among the peasantry. As regards propaganda among the Congress rank and file, he held that serious Congress workers would be attracted to the Congress Socialist Party through patient propaganda and contact, publication of Socialist literature in provincial languages and organization of study classes. As regards work among the workers he outlined the following programme:

With regard to labour, the idea is not to organise any sort of labour. We should first of all concentrate on such fields of labour organisation as may be of political advantage.

It should be remembered that the general strike is the goal. Naturally strikes in such places as will affect imperialism and its working, would be the most effective. Railways, mines, the heavy industries should be our first concern. . . . Other industries and interests of the labourers are not to be neglected but in view of our resources, it is better to keep in mind the comparative ultimate effectiveness of our various activities.

Regarding the peasants, Jayaprakash Narayan called upon the Congress

Socialists to develop agitation on 'a live issue' by studying the peasant problems in a particular province or area.⁴⁹

The growth of the Congress Socialist movement was accompanied by 'a phenomenal awakening' among the peasants, workers and students. Through the efforts of Professor N.G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and others, the All-India Kisan Sabha was organized. The first All-India Kisan Congress met in Lucknow in 1936. The kisan organizations demanded the abolition of landlordism, reduction of land tax, rent and debt relief, and collective affiliation to the Congress. There was a union of the two wings of All-India Trade Union Congress in 1935. In view of the growing consciousness among the workers and peasants, in August 1935, the Congress Working Committee formed two sub-committees — Peasants' Sub-committee and Labour Sub-Committee — so as to remain in touch with the problems of the peasantry and the labour.

The formal retirement of Gandhi (whose leadership was unchallengeable despite the fact that a section of Congressmen differed from him ideologically) from the Congress in the Bombay session of October 1934, and the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party made it clear that the Congress party was heading towards ideological bipolarization into rightists and leftists. The rightists continued to look up to Gandhi for guidance and inspiration. The leftists, consisting mostly of the younger elements, looked up to Jawaharlal Nehru for leadership. Jawaharlal's position was thus described by Gandhi in his letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel early in September 1934: 'Then there is the growing group of Socialists. Jawaharlal is their undisputed leader. I know pretty well what he wants and stands for. . . . The socialist group represents his views more or less, though probably their mode of execution is not exactly his. That group is bound to grow in influence and importance.'⁵⁰

The right-wing Congressmen consisted of the staunch followers of Gandhi and the parliamentary group. Their position was strong in the Congress organization; they constituted the majority in the Congress Working Committee. During 1935, Rajendra Prasad, a staunch follower of Gandhi, was the Congress President. On the completion of his term, Jawaharlal was elected as the Congress President for 1936 at the suggestion of Gandhi. Official reports indicate that Gandhi chose Jawaharlal as he felt that as president, Nehru would hesitate to go those lengths of indiscretion from which, in the less responsible position of the leader of Socialists, it would have been difficult to restrain him.' There was the fear that as the leader of the socialist group Jawaharlal might prove 'too strong for the official Congress element', and that the victory of the socialists might result in the dissolution of the Congress Party.⁵¹

Though Nehru was a leftist, his leadership of the party was acceptable

to many staunch followers of Gandhi. In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya, 'He was expected to serve as the bridge between the old and the new, between Gandhism and Communism and therefore peculiarly well-fitted to fill the presidential chair at Lucknow.'⁵²

4. The Act of 1935 — Contrasting Approaches

On 4 August 1935, the Government of India Act had been passed by the British Parliament. Though initially the Congress Party had almost unanimously repudiated the Act, yet the subsequent developments showed that right-wing Congressmen were inclined to accept offices under it, but with critical reservations. The left-wing Congressmen, i.e. mostly the Congress Socialists, stood for non-cooperation with the implementation of the Government of India Act even to the extent of non-participation in the elections under it. Jawaharlal held that the Act was deliberately designed to strengthen all the vested and reactionary elements in India, and that acceptance of office under it would be a retrograde step, resulting in the disintegration of the Congress and the creation of obstacles in the launching of a civil disobedience movement at an early date.⁵³ Subhas Chandra Bose held that the Act was 'a scheme, not for self government, but for maintaining British rule in the new condition, through the help of the Indian princes and sectarian, reactionary and Pro-British Organisations.'⁵⁴ The Bengal Congress Socialists' Conference, meeting under the presidentship of Jayaprakash Narayan on 21 September 1935, passed a resolution exhorting all Congressmen to express their disapproval of the willingness on the part of a section of Congressmen to accept ministerial offices under the new constitution.⁵⁵ The All-India Congress Socialist Party, in its second session held at Meerut on 19 and 20 January 1936, called upon the National Congress to reject the Government of India Act of 1935 and advised those who entered the Councils under it to press for such demands as replacement of land revenue by graduated income tax on agricultural incomes above Rs 500/- per annum, abolition of landlordism and other forms of intermediaries between the state and the cultivator, a minimum wage of not less than Rs 30/-, for a 40-hour week, freedom of speech and press, cancellation of all arrears of debt and revenue and provision of cheap credit. This session passed a resolution, moved by Jayaprakash Narayan, urging the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as the president of the ensuing session of the Congress.⁵⁶

In April 1936, the annual session of the Congress met at Lucknow. The leftists expected much from the session, as Jawaharlal Nehru was the president. With the consent of the Congress President, Communist leaflets in Hindi and English were distributed at Lucknow by the members of the Communist Party of Bombay who were assisted by the Congress volunteers. Earlier Nehru had approved of the desire of the

Communists to join the Congress in large numbers.⁵⁷ The Congress Socialist Party distributed copies of a leaflet entitled 'Working Committee's Dangerous Drift'. The leaflet criticized the Congress Working Committee for proposing to shelve the question of office acceptance under the Act of 1935 and appealed to the party representatives in the Subjects Committee to declare their resolve to make the working of the 'Sham Constitution' (The Act of 1935) impossible and make it clear 'that in no circumstances shall Congressmen become the lackeys of imperialism by accepting ministerial responsibility without power'.⁵⁸ M.G. Hallett, the Home Secretary, Government of India, regarded the propaganda leaflets of the Communists and the Congress Socialists as 'seditious', 'subversive' and 'actionable'.⁵⁹ In his presidential speech at Lucknow, Nehru stressed the importance of socialism as the remedy for the economic ills of India:

I see no way of ending the poverty, vast unemployment, degradation and subjection of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, ending vested interests in the land and industry as well as the feudal autocratic Indian states system. That means ending private property, except in a restricted sense and replacement of the present profit system by the higher ideals of co-operative service.⁶⁰

He stressed the need for a united front of the nationalist forces against British imperialism. To enhance the Congress Party's contact with the masses, he suggested the affiliation of the trade unions of workers' and peasants' organizations (Kisan Sabhas) to the National Congress. The Lucknow Congress stressed the need of ending 'the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry' and asked the Working Committee to draw up 'a full All-India Agrarian Programme as well as a programme for each province'.⁶¹

On two important issues — the mass contact programme and acceptance of office under the Government of India Act, the difference of opinion between the rightists and leftists came to the surface at Lucknow. Sampurnananda's suggestion concerning the representation of workers and peasants in the Congress organization was rejected by a large majority. But a three-member committee, consisting of Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram and Jayaprakash Narayan, was appointed to make recommendations for effective mass contact by the Congress Party.

The Lucknow Congress denounced the Government of India Act as 'designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India' and rejected it in entirety. The Congress demanded a constituent assembly for India in the following words:

The Congress, as representing the will of the Indian people for national freedom and a democratic state, declares that no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution that curtails the sovereignty of the people of India and does not recognise their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future can be accepted. In the opinion of the Congress such a constitution must be based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a constituent assembly elected on adult franchise or a franchise which approximates to it as nearly as possible. The Congress, therefore, reiterates and stresses the demand for a constituent assembly in the name of the Indian people and calls upon its representatives and members in legislatures and outside to work for the fulfilment of this demand.⁶²

But while condemning the Act of 1935, the Congress decided to contest the elections to the Provincial Assemblies on the basis of a manifesto. Regarding the acceptance of the ministerial office under the Act, the Congress 'considered it inadvisable to commit itself to any decision at that stage and left it to be decided at the proper time by the AICC after consulting the provincial Congress Committees'. Regarding office acceptance, the right-wing Congressmen urged the advantage of its acceptance as a means to work the constitution for the benefit of the masses. Socialists stood for the outright rejection of office. Being the president, Jawaharlal violated the established custom by expressing his opinion against office acceptance. At Gandhi's suggestion, to prevent the widening of differences, the decision on office acceptance was postponed.⁶³

The Lucknow Congress ended in disappointment for left-wing Congressmen and the socialists. In official circles there was jubilation over the failure of the leftists to have their views approved: 'The militant attitude of the socialists availed little beyond ensuring that their case received full attention.' A further cause of satisfaction in the official circles was that, though in his presidential speech Jawaharlal had stressed the necessity of socialism for India, yet his advocacy of socialism 'rarely went beyond a theoretical exposition of the principle', and that he had no immediate programme for the execution of socialist ideas.⁶⁴

About the triumph of right-wing Congressmen over the leftists, G.D. Birla observed:

Mahatmaji kept his promise and without his uttering a word, he saw that no new commitments were made. Jawaharlalji's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket, because all the resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech. He could have caused a split by resigning but he did not Jawaharlalji seems to be like a typical English democrat who takes defeat in a sporting spirit. He seems to be out for giving expression to his ideology but he realises that action is impossible and so does not press for it.⁶⁵

Nehru confessed his failure in the Lucknow Congress in a letter to his supporters as well as critics: 'Nothing that could be called socialistic appeared in any of the resolutions at Lucknow.'⁶⁶ He did not take his failure 'sportingly'. He even contemplated resignation from the presidency at the end of the Lucknow session. Of course, he did not carry his ideological difference to the logical consequence of a split, because he felt that 'there can be no division of our ranks when the call of independence came to all of us and tingled the blood in our veins.'⁶⁷ While constituting his Working Committee he had to give preponderance to right-wing Congressmen. Out of fifteen members, ten were right-wing Congressmen who represented Gandhi's viewpoint. Subhas Chandra Bose, a prominent leftist, who was nominated by Nehru as a member of the Working Committee was in jail. The other three were Congress Socialists: Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan. These three Congress Socialists were said to have been chosen at the instance of Gandhi on the grounds of their social acceptability.⁶⁸ The Lucknow Congress demonstrated the strong grip that Gandhi and his followers had over the Congress organization, even though Gandhi himself did not take part in the deliberations of the Congress.

Ideological difference between Gandhi and Nehru widened further during and after the Lucknow Congress. Gandhi confessed this in his letter to Agatha Harrison: 'Jawaharlal's way is not my way . . . I do not accept practically any of his methods. I would strain every nerve to prevent a class war. So would he, I expect. But he does not believe it to be possible to avoid it. I believe it to be perfectly possible especially if my method is accepted.' Of course, in spite of the ideological difference, Gandhi felt near in heart to Nehru. Gandhi felt very sure that, in spite of ideological differences, in practice Jawaharlal would not take any extreme step because though 'extreme in presentation of methods, he is sober in action.'⁶⁹

Though the majority in the Congress Working Committee did not subscribe to socialism, yet in his personal capacity Nehru preached socialistic ideas. On 17 May 1936 he addressed at Bombay a huge gathering of 25,000 people, most of them workers, on the occasion of the fifteenth session of the All-India Trade Union Congress. He appealed to the working class to take their due share in the struggle for freedom which was being carried on by the Congress, because Congress was fighting the battle of workers.⁷⁰ On this visit to Bombay, he also addressed a meeting held under the auspices of the Congress Socialist Party, declaring that he saw no method other than socialism for ensuring freedom for the masses. He contended that the Marxian interpretation of history provided an explanation of world problems whose solution lay in scientific socialism. Socialism, he said, was the inevitable sequel to

the capitalist order. He proclaimed that his commitment to socialism was both intellectual and emotional, based on contact with actual life and his reaction to this experience.⁷¹

But at the same time Nehru advised the Congress Socialists not to weaken the Congress. When he was asked what the Congress Socialist Party should do if the Congress put up a right-wing candidate in the coming election against a non-Congress left-wing candidate, Nehru advised the Congress Socialists to support the Congress candidate. He held that the formation of the Congress Socialist Party was such that by its very nature it should support a Congress candidate.⁷²

In another speech in Bombay, on 18 May 1936, Nehru accused the capitalists of duplicity: trying to placate the Congress on the one hand and the British Government on the other. He called upon them to define their position in relation to the struggle for independence.⁷³

The advocacy of socialism by Nehru and the Congress Socialists encountered opposition from the capitalists, government and the right-wing Congressmen. Twenty-one leading businessmen of Bombay issued a statement holding that Nehru's 'destructive and subversive programme' would lead to chaos and hinder the attainment of self-government.⁷⁴ The government became alarmed at the spread of socialism. The Punjab Government considered Nehru 'a potential danger of the first magnitude'. The Government of the United Provinces regarded Nehru's speeches as 'dangerous'. The Madras Government considered Nehru to be 'a strong advocate of the Communist doctrine which seeks not merely the elimination but complete destruction of the existing form of Government'.⁷⁵ The government tried to suppress the socialists by arrests, police raids and convictions. On 12 May 1936, the CID raided and searched the office of the Punjab Socialist Party at Lahore and the houses of the General Secretary of the Punjab Socialist Party and its other office-bearers. Similar searches were carried out in the houses of socialists in Amritsar. These were a sequel to the distribution of the Communist leaflets in a meeting on 10 May, which was being held in observance of Subhas Bose Day, demanding his release from jail.⁷⁶ By July 1936 there were two thousand political detenus in Bengal and about fifty socialists and Congress workers of the Punjab had been served with orders of internment in their respective villages.

Within the Congress, the right-wing Congressmen were not prepared to brook the socialistic propaganda of Nehru and his socialist colleagues in the Working Committee. On 29 June 1936, seven right-wing members of the committee — Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, J.B. Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram, Shankarrao Deo and Jamnalal Bajaj — submitted a letter of resignation stating: 'The preaching and emphasizing of socialism particularly at this stage by the president and

other socialist members of the Working Committee while the Congress has not adopted it is prejudicial to the best interests of the country and to the success of the national struggle for freedom which we all hold to be the first and paramount concern for the country.' They held the view that the Congress should 'follow the ideals and the line of action and policy which it has been following since 1920', which they considered 'best suited to our country particularly in the present conditions'. They alleged that the speeches of Nehru and his socialist colleagues had weakened the Congress organization and done harm to the election campaign.⁷⁷ A break in the Congress seemed almost inevitable. But it was averted through the intervention of Gandhi. The seven right-wingers withdrew their resignations two days later on condition that in future the Congress President represented the majority view. The right-wingers criticized Nehru for his allegedly disparaging remarks about *khadi* and his appointment of young socialists in the AICC office.

Though the break was averted, the president, Jawaharlal Nehru, felt 'troubled in mind'. He wrote to Gandhi on 5 July 1936 that the meeting of the Working Committee had exhausted him and had had a 'devitalising effect' on him, and he confessed his inability to part with the ideas which he considered as part of his self.⁷⁸ Nehru felt bewildered at the contrast between the thunderous and prodigal ovation he got from the masses, and the opposition he met with from right-wingers in the Working Committee.

In July 1936 there were rumours of a widening of differences between Gandhi and Nehru. Some newspapers reported Gandhi to have said that his life's work had been ruined by Nehru's programme. Gandhi refuted such reports in the *Harijan* dated 25 July: 'No doubt, there are differences of opinion between us. They were clearly set forth in the letters we exchanged some years ago. But they do not affect our personal relations in any way whatsoever. We remain the same adherents to the Congress goal that we have ever been.'

Nehru yielded to the pressure of his right-wing colleagues and compromised with them because of his total commitment to the Congress and its main objective — the freedom of the country. He realized the futility of quarrelling over socialism, a thing of the future, which should follow the overthrow of foreign rule, at the cost of the paramount objective of independence. As Jawaharlal put it: 'Before socialism comes or can even be attempted there must be a power to shape our destiny. There must be political independence. That remains the big and all-absorbing issue before us and whether we believe in socialism or not, if we are serious about our independence, we must join forces to wrest it from unwilling hands.'⁷⁹ In his message for the socialist conference, sent to M.R. Masani on 20 December 1936, Jawaharlal remarked that, at the

moment, the cause of socialism could be 'best served by building up a powerful anti-imperialist joint front in the country', and that the National Congress was the only organization which could function as such a joint front.⁸⁰

5. Elections and After

On 22 August 1936, the Working Committee met in Bombay to adopt the election manifesto for the provincial assembly elections under the Act of 1935. By that time the wrangling between the rightists and leftists had been considerably lessened. The Working Committee met 'more like a gathering of family members than a formal committee meeting'. The election manifesto was unanimously adopted by the Working Committee. It repudiated the Government of India Act, 1935, as well as the Communal Award and declared that the Congressmen going to the legislatures would aim at wrecking the Act. The question of acceptance of office was shelved; to be decided after the election. The manifesto demanded civil liberties and equal rights for all. In the rural sector, its economic programme included reform of land tenure, reduction of rent and revenue, exemption of uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue and inquiry into peasants' debts and their reduction. In the industrial sector, the manifesto promised to improve the workers' standard of living and conditions of work and reduce the hours of work. It promised relief against old age, sickness and unemployment, and demanded the workers' right to 'form unions and to strike for the protection of their rights'.⁸¹

There was a clear reflection of the Gandhian programme on the election manifesto: prohibition, removal of untouchability, uplift of the backward classes, and encouragement of khadi and village industries (protection of large industries should not be prejudicial to the village industries).⁸² There was, so to say, no radical reflection of a socialist programme in the manifesto. Neither was the abolition of landlordism advocated in the rural sector nor the nationalization of industries in the urban sector.

On 18 and 19 August 1936, the Congress Labour Committee met at Bombay and conferred with the representatives of the All-India Trade Union Congress, National Trade Union Federation, All-India Railwaymen's Federation, All-India Press Workers' Federation and Ahmedabad Textiles Association as to how the Congress could help the labour organizations in solving the workers' problems. The committee called upon the employers to give facilities to the workers for building up labour organizations and give recognition to bona fide unions for the purpose of negotiation and stop victimization of workers for participating in the legitimate trade union activities. The Labour Committee asked the Congress parliamentary wing to secure legislation for the payment

of adequate wages to the workers in the state-protected industries. The Committee called upon the Indian states to improve the condition of workers within their jurisdiction 'at least to the standard prevailing in British India'.⁸³

As Congress president, Nehru formed the Indian Civil Liberties Union on non-party lines to fight for civil liberties which had great relevance in the context of the freedom struggle.

The close of 1936 saw another Congress session, held in the village Faizpur in the East Khandesh District of Bombay Presidency. This was in fulfilment of Gandhi's wish 'that instead of bringing the villages to the Congress held in the cities, the cities should be taken back to the villages and villagers'.⁸⁴ As the Congress session was approaching, the question of the election of the next president created a stir within and outside the Congress, which in a way revived the rightist-leftist controversy. In recognition of Jawaharlal's dynamism as the president for 1936 there was a demand from many for his re-election. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was another candidate. Before the election, Jawaharlal said:

I shall gladly welcome the election of any of my colleagues and cooperate with him in another capacity in the great enterprise we have undertaken. Should, however, the choice of my countrymen fall on me; I dare not say 'no' to it. I shall submit to their pleasure. Before they so decide, they must realise fully what I stand for, what thoughts move me, what the springs of action are for me in speech and writing.⁸⁵

Jawaharlal virtually sought a mandate for his socialistic views and opposition to office-acceptance through re-election. The contest for presidency did not take place because of Patel's withdrawal. But while withdrawing from the contest Patel made it clear that his withdrawal did not mean that he endorsed all of Jawaharlal's views. On two issues he clarified his differences with Nehru; first, unlike Nehru, he did not believe that 'it is impossible to purge capitalism of its hideousness'; secondly, while Nehru was opposed to the acceptance of office under the Act of 1935, Patel held that he could visualize the occasion, when the acceptance of office may be desirable to achieve the common purpose'. Finally, Patel said, 'The Congress does not part with its powers by electing any individual, no matter who he is.'⁸⁶

Nehru's statement on the election to the presidency was interpreted in the press as virtually seeking 'a vote for socialism and anti-office acceptance'. Some of Nehru's colleagues asked him to state whether such an interpretation was endorsed by him or not. Thereafter Nehru issued a statement which was rather ambiguous. He said:

It would be absurd for me to treat this presidential election as vote for socialism or anti-office acceptance. I have expressed my views on socialism

and pointed out how this colours all my outlook and my activity. I have further expressed myself often enough against office acceptance and whenever opportunity occurs, I shall press this viewpoint before the Congress, but it is for the Congress to decide the issue directly and on full consideration of it and not as it were by casual and indirect vote. I do believe political independence is the paramount issue before the country and necessity for joint united action on this is incumbment on all of us. I say this to remove any misunderstanding and not suggest even indirectly that I should be elected. If in spite of this I am elected, it can only mean my general line of activity during last eight months is approved by majority of Congressmen and not my particular views on any issue. Considerations that have led me to act in that way hold and in so far as I can, I shall continue to act in the same way whether I am President or not.⁸⁷

In fact, Nehru was committed to both the anti-imperialistic united front and socialism. In view of strong aversion to socialism among a powerful section of Congressmen he found it difficult to reconcile the two commitments. Explaining the Congress Party's ideological stand in the Faizpur session of the Congress, Nehru, in his presidential address, said, 'The Congress today stands for full democracy in India and fights for a democratic state, not for socialism. It is anti-imperialist and strives for great changes in our political and economic structure'.⁸⁸ He called upon Congressmen 'to build up a powerful joint front of all the anti-imperialist forces in the country', including 'the organised workers and peasants'. He noted that co-operation between the Congress and the workers and peasants had grown during the last year.⁸⁹ About socialism Nehru expressed the hope that 'the logic of events' would lead to socialism, as that was 'the only remedy for India's economic ills'.⁹⁰ Regarding office acceptance he held that the only logical consequence of Congress policy was to have nothing to do with 'the office and the ministry'. He called office acceptance 'a kind of partnership with British imperialism in the exploitation of the Indian people'.⁹¹ But the Faizpur Congress, instead of deciding against office acceptance, resolved that the matter would be decided after the provincial assembly elections. The Congress reiterated the demand for a Constituent Assembly and decided to observe 1 April as a day of hartal against the Act of 1935. On 3 November 1936, the All-India Congress Socialist Party had already made an appeal to the Congress to that effect.⁹² The election manifesto, earlier adopted by the Working Committee, was endorsed by the Congress session at Faizpur.

The Faizpur Congress adopted the following agrarian programme:

1. Rent and revenue should be readjusted, having regard to present conditions and there should be substantial reduction in both.
2. Uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent or land tax.

3. Agricultural incomes should be assessed to income tax like all other incomes on a progressive scale, subject to the prescribed minimum.
4. Canal and other irrigation rates should be substantially lowered.
5. All feudal dues, levies and forced labour should be abolished and demands other than rent should be made illegal.
6. Fixing of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees should be provided for all tenants.
7. An effort should be made to introduce co-operative farming.
8. The crushing burden of rural debt should be removed.
9. Arrears of rents for previous years should generally be wiped out.
10. Common pasture lands should be provided and the rights of the people in tanks, wells, ponds, forests and the like recognized and no encroachment on these rights be permitted.
11. Arrears of rents should be recoverable in the same manner as civil debts and not by ejectment.
12. There should be statutory provision for securing a living wage and suitable working conditions for agricultural labourers.
13. Peasant unions should be recognized.⁹³

Gandhi's speech at Faizpur emphasized the relevance of the constructive programme which he had placed before the Congress in 1920:

I said in 1920 that if Congress truly and successfully worked the programme laid down in 1920 including the four-fold constructive programme of *Khadi*, communal unity, prohibition of intoxicants and removal by Hindus of untouchability, the attainment of *Swaraj* within a year was a certainty. I am neither sorry for nor ashamed of having made that declaration. I would like to repeat that declaration before you today. Whenever the four-fold programme is achieved in its fullness, you can have the *Swaraj* for the asking. For you will then have attained the power to take it.⁹⁴

He also expressed his support for the parliamentary programme as its success would 'prevent the Government from claiming that Ordinance rule or any measure restricting our progress to the goal was sanctioned by the popular representatives'.⁹⁵ He did not express his views on the socialist programme. About socialism, he only said that it was not new to the Indian society.⁹⁶

By the close of 1936, the Congress was carrying on its electioneering campaign for the provincial assemblies. The organization of electioneering had been entrusted by the party to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In electioneering, the right-wing Congressmen such as Rajendra Prasad, Govind Ballabh Pant, Bhulabhai Desai and C. Rajagopalachari were untiring in their labours for securing victory for the party. Jawaharlal Nehru, even though opposed to office acceptance, extended his 'wonderful' co-operation in electioneering activities.

With the victory of the Congress party in the provincial assembly elections held in January 1937, the question of acceptance of office came

to the forefront. A majority of right-wing Congressmen and Mahatma Gandhi were in favour of the conditional acceptance of office, i.e. the Congress would form ministries in those provinces where the governor would give an assurance that he would not exercise his special powers to interfere with the work of the ministry. But most of the left-wing Congressmen, particularly the Congress Socialists, were totally opposed to office acceptance. The right-wing Congressmen contended that while accepting office under the Act of 1935, the Congress would carry on efforts within and outside the legislature to wreck the Act, demand a constituent assembly to make constitution for India, and would never lose sight of the ultimate goal of the Congress, i.e. the independence of the country. There was a heated controversy mostly between the right-wing and left-wing Congress leaders in the meeting of the All India Congress Committee held at Delhi on 17 and 18 March 1937. The official resolution, 'The New Constitution and the Congress Policy', which was moved by Rajendra Prasad, rejected the Act of 1935, voiced the demand for a constituent assembly and stressed the view that all Congress members of the legislature should work inside and outside the legislature to 'bring out the inherent antagonism, between British Imperialism and Indian Nationalism and expose the autocratic and undemocratic nature of the new Constitution.' Regarding office acceptance, the resolution stated:

The All-India Congress Committee authorises and permits the acceptance of offices in provinces where the Congress commands a majority in the legislature, provided the ministerships shall not be accepted unless the leader of the Congress Party in the legislature is satisfied and is able to state publicly that the governor will not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities.⁹⁷

This resolution was seconded by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. When it came up for discussion, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the party president, held that, before coming to a final decision on the question, all schools of thought should be given a chance to express their views. In reply to a query made by Sardar Sardul Singh, as to the authenticity of the press report that the Working Committee had unanimously accepted the resolution on office acceptance, Nehru replied: 'I do not want to be formal and I can tell you that the members of the Working Committee were sharply divided on the question.'⁹⁸

To this resolution, Jayaprakash Narayan moved an amendment, proposing the non-acceptance of office on the ground that the acceptance of ministerial offices by Congressmen was inconsistent with the policy of the Congress and would 'weaken the struggle for national independence. The amendment held that, within the framework of the Government of India Act, 1935, the Congress ministers could not 'secure any

appreciable amelioration in the condition of the exploited and oppressed section of the people or any substantial political or economic concession for them' and would, on the other hand, make themselves 'a party to repression and exploitation which is implicit in the imperialist regime'. While moving the amendment Jayaprakash Narayan said that there were reformist and revolutionary mentalities in the Congress. He held that urging the acceptance of office was an expression of a reformist mentality and that urging the wrecking of the constitution expressed a revolutionary mentality, and that the two were irreconcilable.⁹⁹

In the course of the thirteen hours of discussion on this question, thirty delegates spoke. The prominent right wingers such as Satyamurti, C. Rajagopalachari, Jairamdas Daulatram, Bhulabhai Desai and Vallabhbhai Patel supported the resolution. Two right-wing Congressmen, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Pattabhi Sitaramayya opposed office acceptance. Swami Sahajanand, Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, P.H. Patwardhan, M.R. Masani and Acharya Narendra Deva were the prominent left wingers who supported Jayaprakash Narayan's amendment. M.N. Roy was the only left winger who supported the official resolution. Nehru, though actually opposed to the official resolution, could not openly express this because of his official position, but he permitted the members of the Working Committee to express their views freely on the official resolution. Satyamurti held that overwhelming majority of the provincial and local Congress committees were in favour of office acceptance. He held that, barring direct action, there was no better, quicker, and more effective way of fighting the Act than the acceptance of office. He also held that to fulfil its promises in the election manifesto, the Congress should accept office.¹⁰⁰ Rajagopalachari asserted that 'The policy of opposition to the Constitution Act is retained in the resolution.' Supporting the official resolution, he further said:

If you do not take office, you will only give opportunities to the Governor to have recourse to one section of the Constitution instead of another. Having got the majority, if you are to remain in the opposition, I think we had better reserve our energy for other channels. But having spent them on the elections, we must follow up our success by taking office. . . . As soon as office becomes a burden, we declare openly, we are not going to stick to it. It is with that attitude I suggest that we should accept office.¹⁰¹

Jairamdas Daulatram did not agree with the view of Jayaprakash Narayan that office acceptance was inconsistent with the object of combating and ending the Act. He held that the masses were not ready for direct action at that moment and that, at that time, the Congress could strengthen the masses better by being in office than in the opposition.¹⁰² Bhulabhai Desai, the leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly, held that by accepting office the Congress would only put the

government to the test and demonstrate whether it was sincere in its grant of provincial autonomy and how real that autonomy was. Bhulabhai Desai saw no conflict between the so-called reformist and revolutionary mentalities and held that there was no reason why in accepting office, the Congress should not silently continue preparation for the revolution.¹⁰³ Vallabhbhai Patel held that the decision to accept office was not incompatible with the previous resolution of the Congress and that the time was suitable for creating a deadlock in a constitutional way and not by direct action like the Dandi March.¹⁰⁴ He said that if the country had been ready for ending the Act by direct action, Gandhi would not have retired from the Congress but would have led another Dandi March. 'If we do not accept office,' observed Patel, 'our opponents will go to the people and say that we did not avail ourselves of the opportunity to do anything for them.' He assured the gathering that 'When the time comes for mass action, we will not hesitate,' and added:

Let our ministers accept offices with the dignified assurance of independent action and non-interference. If we can create power for our people, why should we not do it? How do you think that, by accepting office, we will check the growth of revolutionary mentality? When we talk of weakness we will commit suicide. In our proposal nothing but the good of the country is the objective.¹⁰⁵

Rajendra Prasad pointed out that the intention behind acceptance of office was not to keep mum. He stressed the need for co-ordination of the Congress activities inside and outside the legislatures. He also pointed out that, by acceptance of office, Congress could remove some grievances of the masses without weakening the desire for swaraj.¹⁰⁶

Swami Sahajanand, the kisan leader, made a forceful speech against office acceptance. He held that the official resolution betrayed the growing reformist mentality in the Congress, that Congressmen, by becoming ministers, would be worse than the Liberals, and that office acceptance would strengthen the hands of the reactionaries and British imperialism.¹⁰⁷ Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya opposed office acceptance on the ground that it meant identification with the machinery of British imperialism.¹⁰⁸ P.H. Patwardhan condemned office acceptance a kind of defeat and said that there was no difference between the Liberals and Congressmen like C. Rajagopalachari who advocated office acceptance.¹⁰⁹ M.R. Masani observed that the country was as ready as in 1930 for direct action against the British Government. He asked if the ministership was so desirable, why were the tallest of the leaders in the Congress, who were next to Gandhi in influence, so reluctant to accept offices of ministers themselves.¹¹⁰ Finally, the amendment of Jayaprakash Narayan was rejected by 135 votes to 78 and the official resolution was passed by 127 to 70 votes.

Though conditional office acceptance was approved by the All India Congress Committee, the Congress legislators were required by the party not to lose sight of its revolutionary goals. In the All India National Convention, held in Delhi on 19 March 1937, immediately after the AICC meeting, which was attended by 800 Congress legislators from different provinces and two hundred members of the AICC, the Congress president, Jawaharlal Nehru, deplored the tendency among some Congress elements to slur over the fundamental goals of the Congress and hanker eagerly for offices.¹¹¹ In the convention, Nehru administered the following oath to the Congress legislators who had assembled:

I, a member of the All-India Convention, pledge myself to the service of India and to work in the legislatures and outside for the independence of India and the ending of the exploitation and poverty of her people. I pledge myself to work under the discipline of the Congress for the furtherance of Congress ideals and objectives to the end that India may be free and independent and her millions freed from the heavy burdens they suffer from.¹¹²

By the end of March 1937, the Congress president called upon Congressmen to observe 1 April 1937 as a day of nation wide protest against the Government of India Act, 1935, and pass a resolution in the public meetings, condemning the Act as 'designed to perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the Indian people and to strengthen the hold of British imperialism on India' and demanding a democratic state and a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of adult suffrage, to make a constitution for India.¹¹³ The Congress Socialists decided to observe 1 April in a militant manner, involving stoppage of all forms of transport, labour and other activities. The government took repressive measures against them. On 1 April, 30 persons, including Jayaprakash Narayan, the Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, were arrested.¹¹⁴

6. Congress in Office

Though the approval of conditional office acceptance appeared to left wing Congressmen as a deviation from the revolutionary ideals of the Congress, in other ways the Congress organization was sought to be radicalized. The Congress legislators were urged by the Congress Working Committee not to confine their activities to the legislatures and to be in constant touch with the people of the constituencies and primary and local Congress Committees. In view of the overwhelming support and enthusiasm shown by the masses for the Congress during the election, the Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha held from 27 February to 1 March 1937, called upon the provincial and local committees to increase the association of the masses with the Congress.¹¹⁵

Nehru called upon Congressmen to develop contact with peasants and workers, and their genuine organizations. He advised them 'to make the Congress in the rural areas as nearly a *Kisan* organization as is possible'. He permitted the workers who joined the Congress to use the red flag, used by the workers all over the world, in token of their solidarity with the workers of the world. He asked the local Congress committees to establish co-operation with local trade unions.¹¹⁶

In the meantime the Congress Labour Committee sought to look after the welfare of the workers. At its meeting held at Wardha on 18 and 19 September 1937, the committee called upon the Congress ministries in seven provinces to implement the promises made to the workers in the election manifesto. This meeting resolved that a joint meeting of the Labour Committee and the ministers and the parliamentary secretaries for labour in the Congress governments should be held to devise measures for the uplift of labour and to evolve uniform labour policy. Such a meeting was held in Calcutta on 25 and 26 October 1937. The Congress Labour Committee consisted of Jairamdas Daulatram, Shankarlal Banker, Jayaprakash Narayan, M.R. Masani and J.B. Kripalani. The joint session was opened by Jawaharlal Nehru and was presided over by Jairamdas Daulatram. Before the session opened, Shibnath Banerjee, the President of the All-India Trade Union Congress presented the demands of the Trade Union Congress. N.G. Ranga placed before the conference the grievances of agricultural labour. In the industrial sector, the conference called upon the Congress governments to implement the following programme by 30 June 1938:

1. Introduction of legislation facilitating collection of statistics.
2. Extension of the Factories Act to unregulated establishments.
3. Stricter enforcement of the Factories Act in the case of seasonal factories.
4. Introduction of legislation providing for maternity benefit for a period of not less than eight weeks in provinces where it did not exist.
5. Inquiry into the question of adequacy of wages in organized industries.
6. Establishment of labour exchanges.
7. Provision of leave with pay during sickness.
8. Establishment of machinery for fixing minimum wages.
9. Provision of machinery for the settlement of disputes.
10. Recognition by the state and employers of trade unions which accepted the policy of using peaceful and legitimate means to press their demands.
11. Provision of housing for labour.
12. Scaling down of debts.
13. Regulation of hours of work.
14. Enforcement of holidays with pay.
15. Setting up of a scheme for employment insurance.

16. Formulation of conditions for state aid to industries in regard to treatment of labour.

In the rural sector, the Conference called upon the provincial Congress cabinets to devise plans for providing the landless rural labourers substantial relief by way of suitable occupations in works of rural development during the periods of general seasonal unemployment.¹¹⁷

The formation of the popular ministries by the Congress in seven provinces was followed by an unprecedented increase in the membership of trade unions and peasant organizations and workers' and peasants' strikes and demonstrations. The trade unionists and peasant leaders wanted to convert the Congress organization to their ideology and programme. In 1938 Swami Sahajanand, the President of the All India Kisan Sabha wrote to M.N. Roy:

Now the point naturally arises how to transform the National Congress into 'an effective instrument' for fight for freedom . . . I maintain that it is by organising the peasants and workers in their class unions, by strengthening their organisations, by fighting successfully on economic issues and day to day problems and thus making them conscious of their class interests and in the end by advising them to enter the Congress in millions that we shall be able to transform it. Those who think that by direct enrolment alone of the Congress members from amongst the *Kisans* and *Mazdurs* they will do it, are, I am afraid, theorising only and have no practical experience. We have been trying to achieve this by direct enrolment alone for a decade or so, but practically with no result. But no sooner have we resorted to class organisation than the entire atmosphere do move fast towards radicalisation.¹¹⁸

While the reform measures of the Congress governments failed to satisfy the trade unions and peasant organizations and left-wing Congressmen, some of their measures roused bitter opposition from them. The growing unrest among workers and peasants was viewed with concern by the Congress High Command. G.D. Birla complained of rampant 'indiscipline' in Congress provinces.¹¹⁹ In the *Harijan*, Gandhi criticized the increasing lawlessness. He pointed out that 'Civil liberty is not criminal liberty . . . Civil liberty means the fullest liberty to say and do what one likes within the ordinary law of the land.'¹²⁰

In Bombay, the Bombay Trades Disputes Act, passed by the Congress Government in November 1938, roused bitter opposition from the trade union movement. The Act imposed compulsory arbitration and six months' jail for illegal strikes (and no corresponding penalty for lock-outs) and laid down rules for the registration of trade unions which the trade union leaders considered advantageous to unions sponsored by the employers. The entire trade union movement (except the Gandhian

trade unionists of Ahmedabad) protested against the measure. On 6 November 1938, at Bombay, a protest rally of 80,000 people was addressed by S.A. Dange, Indulal Yagnik and B.R. Ambedkar. On 7 November, the Bombay Trade Union Congress organized a protest strike. The situation became so serious in Bombay that the police had to open fire to disperse the crowds; as a result, one person was killed and several others injured.

In Bihar, the Congress ministry adopted a conciliatory attitude towards the zamindars as the zamindars threatened in September 1937 to start 'civil disobedience'. After some time a secret agreement was reached at Patna between the landlords on the one hand and Congress leaders such as Maulana Azad and Rajendra Prasad on the other. Consequently, the Kisan Sabha, under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand, organized agitations. The peasants became very militant and refused to pay rent in 1938/39. They raised the slogan, '*Laga lege kaise; danda hamara zindabad!*' (How will you collect rent; long live our *lathis!*). There was virtually a clash between the Congress ministry of Bihar and the Kisan Sabha. The Congress Committees in Champaran, Saran and Monghyr districts prohibited Congressmen from attending Sahajanand's meetings. Jayaprakash Narayan resigned from the Congress Working Committee, alleging that the Congress ministry of Bihar and the Congress leaders were adopting a pro-zamindar stand. Sahajanand's advocacy of the *lathi* was criticized by the Congress authorities as an advocacy of violence and he was expelled from the Congress.¹²¹

Though the Congress finally decided to accept office in the provinces in spite of the opposition of the left-wingers and others such as Sardar Sardul Singh, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Mrs Vijayalaxmi Pandit, it remained opposed to the federal part of the Government of India Act, 1935, because of the weightage given to the princes in the federal legislature, its limited powers, and the wide discretionary powers of the viceroy. The AICC, in its Calcutta session of October 1937, approved the resolution of the Working Committee against the implementation of federal scheme of the Act:

In view of the announcements made on behalf of the British Government that steps will be taken to inaugurate the proposed federation, the All-India Congress Committee reiterates its emphatic condemnation of and complete opposition to the scheme and its decision to combat it in every possible way open to it. The attempt to inaugurate the scheme despite the clearly expressed will of the nation will be a challenge to the people of India. The Committee, therefore, calls on provincial Governments and ministries to prevent the imposition of the Federation which will do grave injury to India and tighten the hands which hold her in subjection to the imperialistic domination and reaction. The Committee is of opinion that the provincial governments should move their legislatures to give formal expression to

this opposition to the proposed federation and request the British Government not to impose it on their provinces.¹²²

But at the Calcutta AICC meeting, the left-wingers, such as M.R. Masani, N.G. Ranga, and Jayaprakash Narayan, suspected that the right-wingers who constituted a majority in the Congress Working Committee might ultimately accept the federal scheme and suggested that the Congress should take a decision to start direct action against the scheme. Jayaprakash Narayan pointed out that the way the Congress Governments were conducting themselves indicated that the country was moving further away from combating the federal scheme. But the leftists were not determined enough to press their point and withdrew their suggestion, and the Working Committee's original resolution was passed.

Towards the close of Nehru's second term as the Congress President, the Congress Working Committee, at its meeting held at Bombay in the first week of January 1938, adopted a revised Independence Day Pledge to be taken on 26 January 1938:

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain *Purna Swaraj* or complete Independence.

We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to *Swaraj* following peaceful and legitimate methods and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain independence.

We pledge ourselves anew to the independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry on non-violently the struggle for freedom till *Purna Swaraj* is attained.¹²³

Nehru's presidentship for two terms (1936 and 1937) had given 'a fillip to the radical forces in the Congress'.¹²⁴ On completion of Nehru's terms, Subhas Chandra Bose was unanimously elected as president for the fifty-first session of the Congress, held at Haripura, Gujarat, from 19 to 21 February 1938. Gandhi had supported his election. The new president, about forty years old, was a pronounced left-winger and differed from Gandhian ideology even more frankly and directly than Jawaharlal Nehru. Not only did he differ with Gandhian ideology, i.e. Gandhi's

views on landlordism, the princely order, capitalism and industrialism, but he also disapproved of the Gandhian technique of non-violence. In his autobiography, *The Indian Struggle*, published in London in January 1935, Bose expressed himself as follows about Gandhi as a leader:

He [Gandhi] has failed because the strength of a leader depends not on the largeness — but on the character — of one's following. With a much smaller following, other leaders have been able to liberate their country — while the Mahatma with a much larger following has not. He has failed, because while he has understood the character of his own people — he has not understood the character of his opponents. The logic of the Mahatma is not the logic which appeals to John Bull. He has failed, because his policy of putting all his cards on the table will not do. We have to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's — and in a political fight the art of diplomacy cannot be dispensed with. He has failed because he has not made use of the international weapon. If we desire to win our freedom through non-violence, diplomacy and international propaganda are essential. He has failed because the false unity of interests that are inherently opposed is not a source of strength but a source of weakness in political warfare. The future of India rests exclusively with those radical and militant forces that will be able to undergo the sacrifice and suffering necessary for winning freedom.¹²⁵

Bose had also hinted in his autobiography at the possibility of the entire Congress machinery being captured by the leftists in future.¹²⁶

7. Gathering War Clouds and the Crisis in the Congress

The Haripura Congress met at a time of mounting tension at home and abroad. There was growing unrest among the trade unions and Kisan Sabhas because of the dissatisfaction with the limited reform measures. 'People began to ask in wonderment how it was that the zamindars stayed where they had been, that the *zulum* of the police continued unabated, that the sufferings and miseries of the cultivators were still awaiting redress, while the prisoners convicted of crimes of violence were pining away in jails in Bengal, Bihar and the Punjab and in the Andamans.'¹²⁷ The Congress ministries had put in their resignations in Bihar and UP because the governors of these two provinces did not allow political prisoners convicted of the crimes of violence to be released. In Europe, Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany were pursuing aggressive policies, while democratic Britain was following a policy of appeasement.

In his presidential speech at the Haripura Congress on 19 February, Subhas Chandra Bose described the acceptance of offices in the provinces as an 'experimental measure' and indicated the possibility of 'a big campaign of Civil Disobedience' against the forcible introduction of federation. He stressed the necessity for the abolition of landlordism,

liquidation of agricultural indebtedness, scientific agriculture and a comprehensive scheme of industrial development under state ownership and state control.

He asked the Congress to take advantage of the international situation for the cause of Indian liberation. He indirectly hinted at the necessity of taking the help of anti-British powers for the sake of independence:

We must have a correct appreciation of the world situation at every stage and we should know how to take advantage of it. In connection with our foreign policy, the first suggestion that I have to make is that we should not be influenced by internal politics of any country or the form of its state. We shall find in every country, men and women who will sympathise with Indian freedom, no matter what their own political views may be. In this matter I should take a leaf out of Soviet diplomacy.¹²⁸

Though Bose described Congress as 'the common platform for all anti-imperialist organisations striving for Indian emancipation' and prayed for the long life of Mahatma Gandhi, he publicly demonstrated his leaning towards the left in the presidential speech: 'I would appeal especially to the leftist group to pool all their strength and resources for democratising the Congress and reorganising it on the broadest anti-imperialist basis.'¹²⁹

The Haripura Congress reiterated the condemnation of the Government of India Act of 1935, denounced the proposed federation, and reiterated demand for a constituent assembly. The following resolution was passed:

The Congress is not opposed to the idea of a federation, but a real federation must, even apart from the question of responsibility, consist of three units enjoying more or less the same measure of freedom and civil liberty and representation by democratic process of election. The Indian states participating in the federation should approximate to the provinces in the establishment of representative institution, responsible government, civil liberties and method of election to the federal houses. Otherwise the federation, as it is now contemplated, will, instead of building up Indian unity, encourage separate tendencies and involve the states in internal and external conflicts.¹³⁰

The Haripura Congress resolved to extend its support and goodwill to the movement for responsible government and civil liberties in the princely states, because 'the only kind of federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the states participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India.'¹³¹

The resolution on the Kisan Sabhas was a disappointment for the leftists. While the Congress invited the kisans to join it in large numbers

and recognized their rights to form Kisan Sabhas, the party expressed its inability to 'associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of Congress' and 'countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen, who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy'. The provincial Congress committees were called upon to bear this in mind and take suitable action wherever called for.¹³²

The Labour Committee of the Congress met in May 1938. By that time the Governments of Bombay and UP had appointed committees to investigate into working conditions and wage structure of labour in the textile industry. The Bombay committee's recommendations had been accepted by the Congress ministry of Bombay and, to a great extent, implemented by the textile millowners. The Congress Labour Committee urged that the example of Bombay should be followed by other provinces and similar provincial committees be appointed to inquire into the condition of the working class and settle trade union disputes.

Bose saw no inherent conflict between large-scale industries and cottage industries. At his initiative, a Planning Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru to draw up a blueprint of the industrial development of India. Bose later held the view that his idea of planning the country's industrial development caused annoyance to Gandhi, as the latter 'was opposed to industrialisation'.¹³³ Gandhi advised his followers to stay away from the planning committee. The idea of state control of industry and agriculture which emerged out of the planning committee aroused opposition from right-wing Congressmen.¹³⁴

The Congress president went on constantly urging Congressmen to adopt an uncompromising policy towards the British Government. In view of the aggressive activities of Germany and Italy, and England's policy of appeasement, he considered the time most opportune for direct action against the British Government. As early as 13 March 1938, in a speech at Calcutta, Bose pointed out that the psychological moment had arrived when Indians should press their united demands on the British nation who, according to him, were at that time powerless to resist them.¹³⁵ After the Munich Pact in September, Bose carried on open propaganda calling upon the Indian people to prepare for a national struggle which 'should synchronise with the coming war' in Europe.¹³⁶ Neither Gandhi nor the majority of the members in the Congress Working Committee approved of Bose's uncompromising policy and his proposal to launch direct action in the near future.

By the end of 1938, the right-wing Congressmen in the Working Committee were thinking of replacing Bose as president. Gandhi was decidedly against the re-election of Bose, because he was apprehensive

that his impetuous militancy might precipitate a premature civil disobedience. On his part, Bose was seeking re-election to the office. He professed that he was contesting the election on an ideological issue, viz. opposition to federation. Bose and most of the left-wingers suspected that if the right-wingers were allowed to have their way, they might accept federation. The suspicion of the leftists was not unfounded. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, observed in his letter to the Secretary of State that during his meeting with Gandhi on 16 April 1938, Gandhi gave him 'the impression that he would accept federation, if some larger states introduced principle of popular choice'.¹³⁷ Three names were proposed for presidency — Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Gandhi hoped that with Azad as the president it would be easy for the Congress to ease the communal tension. But Azad withdrew his candidature on 20 January 1939, stating ill-health as the ground and advocating the election of Pattabhi Sitaramayya. On 24 January seven right-wing members of the Congress Working Committee — Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Jamnalal Bajaj, Jairamdas Daulatram, Shankarrao Deo, Bhulabhai Desai and J.B. Kripalani issued a statement asking Bose to 'withdraw from the contest to allow the unanimous election of Pattabhi Sitaramayya'.¹³⁸ In his reply, Bose offered to withdraw, 'if a genuine anti-federationist like Acharya Narendra Deva be accepted as the President for the coming year'. He said further:

If the right-wing really want a national unity and solidarity, they would be well-advised to accept a leftist as President. They have created considerable misapprehension by their insistence on a rightist candidate at any cost and by an unseemly manner in which they have set up such a candidate [Maulana Azad] who was retiring and who had been surprised that his name had been suggested for the Congress presidency.¹³⁹

On 25 January, Sardar Patel issued a statement that it had been decided in an informal meeting in which Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Bhulabhai Desai, Kripalani and Patel himself had taken part that, if Azad did not agree to contest for presidency, Pattabhi Sitaramayya should be elected instead of Bose. In his reply to Patel's statement, Bose pointed out that the leftists strongly felt the necessity of having a genuine anti-federationist in the presidential chair, because 'some influential Congress leaders have been advocating the conditional acceptance of the federation in private and public'.¹⁴⁰ On 25 January, Pattabhi Sitaramayya issued a statement from Bardoli, announcing his decision to contest for the presidential office in deference to the opinion of his valued colleagues in the Congress Working Committee.¹⁴¹ Sitaramayya enjoyed the full support of Mahatma Gandhi.

In his bid to secure re-election, Bose got considerable, though

not unanimous, support from the leftists in the Congress. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the kisan leader and Jayaprakash Narayan, the Congress Socialist leader, issued a statement in favour of Bose's re-election on 27 January 1939: 'We do not think that even those who do not agree with his views believe that S. J. Bose would not be an asset to the Congress presidentship at the present juncture.'¹⁴² Acharya Narendra Deva said in a statement to the press: 'There is no question of right or left in this matter. Every delegate should consult only the best interests of the country and cast his vote in an unbiased manner.'¹⁴³

Nehru did not approve of making federation an issue in the election to the presidency as Congress had definitely rejected the federal scheme of the Government of India Act, 1935. Nor was he in favour of the re-election of Subhas Chandra Bose. Nehru frankly wrote to Bose explaining the reasons for his opposition to the latter's re-election:

I was against your standing for election for two major reasons: it meant under the circumstances a break with Gandhiji and I did not want this to take place. . . . It would mean also, I thought, a set-back for the real left. The left was not strong enough to shoulder the burden by itself and when a real contest came in the Congress, it would lose and then there would be a reaction against it. I thought it probable that you would win the election as against Pattabhi, but I doubted very much whether you could carry the Congress with you in a clear contest with what is called Gandhism. Even if by any chance you secured a majority in the Congress, this would not represent a strong enough backing in the country without Gandhiji and effective work, and even more so preparation for a struggle would be very difficult. There were so many disruptive tendencies already existing in the country and instead of controlling them, we would add to them. All this meant weakening our national movement just when strength was necessary.¹⁴⁴

The election took place on 29 January 1939. Bose defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya by 1,580 votes against 1,375. Overwhelming support from the leftists, particularly Congress Socialists, was definitely an important factor responsible for Bose's victory. Gandhi issued a statement saying that the defeat of Sitaramayya was 'more mine than his', since he was 'instrumental in inducing Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Azad withdrew' and also that the victory of Subhas Chandra Bose meant 'that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policies for which I stand'.¹⁴⁵ In the same statement, Gandhi alleged that many of the delegates had been elected on the strength of 'bogus voters' and would be unseated on scrutiny.¹⁴⁶ Gandhi's statement marked the beginning of a crisis within the Congress. On 22 February twelve right-wing members of the Congress Working Committee (the remaining three being Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarat Chandra Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose himself), viz. Sardar Patel,

Maulana Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Sarojini Naidu, Bhulabhai Desai, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Shankarrao Deo, Harekrushna Mahtab, J.B. Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram, Jamnalal Bajaj and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, resigned by signing in a single letter addressed to the President Bose. In their letter they suggested that the president should 'select a homogeneous cabinet, representing the views of the majority'.¹⁴⁷ Nehru also submitted his resignation, but independently.

In the midst of this crisis the annual session of the Congress began at Tripuri (Mahakosal) on 10 March 1939. Subhas Chandra Bose's address, read out to the open session by Sarat Bose the president's brother (Subhas though present in Tripuri could not address the Congress session because of serious illness) suggested that, as Britain's position was weak in the international sphere, the Congress should submit 'our national demand to the British Government in the form of an ultimatum and give a certain time limit within which a reply is to be expected'. 'If no reply is received,' President Bose said, 'we should resort to such sanctions as we possess to enforce our national demand.' 'The sanctions that we possess today,' he held, 'are mass civil disobedience or *Satyagraha*.'¹⁴⁸ Bose suggested that the Congress Working Committee should guide the popular movements in the states for civil liberty and responsible government on a comprehensive and systematic basis and establish co-operation with all anti-imperialist organizations in the country, particularly the kisan sabhas and trade unions.

The major thrust of Bose's speech was an ultimatum to the British Government on the National Demand. Jayaprakash Narayan moved the resolution on National Demand, reiterating the rejection of Government of India Act, 1935, uncompromising opposition to its federal scheme, and the demand for a constituent assembly and recognition of India's right of national self-determination. For the attainment of these objectives, the resolution laid stress on the preparation by the Congress organizations and governments in the provinces and strengthening, purification and unity of the Congress organization. Sarat Bose proposed to add to the National Demand a six-month ultimatum. The National Demand resolution was passed but the proposed ultimatum was rejected.¹⁴⁹

The Congress also passed a resolution disapproving British foreign policy as one of 'the deliberate betrayal of democracy', 'the repeated breach of promise' and 'the ending of the system of collective security'. It was alleged in the resolution that the British foreign policy had consistently aided the fascist powers.¹⁵⁰

At Tripuri, right-wing Congressmen were mainly concerned with the organizational problems of the party. They were not prepared to accept the leadership and policy of President Bose. To counteract it and heal

the wounded feelings of Gandhi, Govind Ballabh Pant, the Prime Minister of UP, moved the following resolution:

The Congress declares its firm adherence to the fundamental policies of the Congress which have governed its programme in the past twenty years under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of the opinion that there should be no break in these policies, and that these should continue to govern the Congress programme in the future. The Congress expresses its confidence in the work of the Working Committee during last year and regrets that any aspersions should have been cast against any of its members. In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the executive authority of the Congress should command his implicit confidence and requests the Congress President to nominate the Working Committee for the ensuing year in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji.¹⁵¹

The resolution was seconded by Rajagopalachari, the Premier of Madras, on behalf of the Congress Socialist Party, Jayaprakash Narayan opposed Pant's resolution, saying that it would weaken the unity of the nationalist forces in a critical period. When the resolution was put to vote, he called upon the socialist delegates to remain neutral.¹⁵² Consequently, the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority in the open session.

On the basis of Pant's resolution, Subhas Chandra Bose carried on negotiations with Gandhi for the constitution of the Congress Working Committee. Bose, in his letter to Gandhi dated 29 March 1939, asked the latter to choose between two alternatives, viz. either to accommodate the conflicting views with regard to the composition of the new Working Committee or to insist on his views in entirety. But Bose also gave a mild threat that, if Gandhi adopted the latter course, 'We may come to the parting of ways.' Bose further wrote to Gandhi: 'At Tripuri the air was thick with the rumour that the resolution [Pant's] had your fullest support.'¹⁵³ Gandhi in his reply of 2 April 1939 advised Bose in the following manner:

Taking all things into consideration, I am of opinion that you should at once form your own cabinet, fully representing your views, formulate your programme definitely and put it before the forthcoming AICC. If the committee accepts the programme, all will be plain sailing and you should be enabled to prosecute it unhampered by the minority. If, on the other hand, your programme is not accepted, you should resign and let the committee choose its president.¹⁵⁴

The AICC met at Calcutta towards the end of April. By that time the

negotiations going on between Gandhi and Bose through correspondence had yielded no result and Bose had not been able to constitute his Working Committee. The AICC meeting was going to be a stormy one. In order to avert further division in the Congress camp, at Gandhi's advice, Patel did not attend the AICC meeting at Calcutta. Prior to the meeting, for the constitution of Working Committee, Bose held discussions with Gandhi and ex-members of the Working Committee. But the discussions proved fruitless. On 29 April, before the AICC meeting, Bose read out Gandhi's letter to him, in which the latter had expressed his incompetence to suggest names for the Congress Working Committee. 'Knowing your own views and knowing how most of the members differ in the fundamentals,' Gandhi had written to Bose in that letter, 'if I gave you the names it would be an imposition on you.'¹⁵⁵ Gandhi had further advised: 'You are free to choose your own Committee', and to discuss with the ex-members of the Working Committee to explore the possibility of 'a mutual approach'.¹⁵⁶ Bose had discussion for several hours with the ex-members of the Working Committee but could not arrive at any settlement. He later expressed the view that he became convinced that 'the Gandhi wing would continue to obstruct, if the executive [Working Committee] was not appointed according to its choice'.¹⁵⁷ Though Bose had contested for presidency against the wishes of the right-wingers and Gandhi, he felt diffident to appoint an executive which excluded them, which was within his power according to the constitution, because the Gandhi wing was organizationally strong, acting under 'a centralised leadership' and he was not sure of the support from the left-wingers who were divided into various groups.

The leftist leaders in the Congress did not want to weaken the unity of the anti-imperialist forces by supporting Bose. Jawaharlal Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan were keen on maintaining the unity of the Congress organization. Nehru had the feeling that Bose was fighting for establishing his personal hold over the party and not for leftist principles. He frankly wrote to Bose: 'If you stood for certain definite leftist principles and policies, then there might be some point in your seeking re-election, as the election would be an education in ideas and policies. But an election on more or less personal basis did not have the merit.'¹⁵⁸ Jayaprakash Narayan held that when the Congress Socialists had voted for Bose in preference to Sitaramayya, they did not anticipate that the election of Bose might lead to division of Congress. He held that the Congress Socialist Party stood for the unity of the Congress.¹⁵⁹

Having failed to constitute his Working Committee, Bose resigned from presidency on 29 April 1939, the day on which the AICC meeting began at Calcutta. Upon his resignation, Mrs Sarojini Naidu presided. At this stage, Nehru made some efforts to bring about a compromise between Bose and the old Working Committee by suggesting that Bose

should withdraw his resignation and reappoint the old Working Committee. He said that as two members of the old Working Committee, Jamnalal Bajaj and Jairamdas Daulatram, were resigning on grounds of health, in their place, Bose should induct two new members in consultation with his colleagues. Jayaprakash Narayan suggested that Nehru should become the General Secretary of the party, while Bose would withdraw his resignation.¹⁶⁰ Since Bose did not withdraw his resignation, Nehru withdrew his resolution. Thereafter the AICC elected Rajendra Prasad as president. The resignation of Bose was followed by ugly demonstrations at Calcutta. The Working Committee which Rajendra Prasad constituted had the following members: Maulana Azad, Mrs Naidu, Sardar Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, Jairamdas Daulatram, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, J.B. Kripalani, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Bhulabhai Desai, Shankarrao Deo, Harekrushna Mahtab, Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy and Prafulla Chandra Ghose.

It was Bose's differences with Gandhi, which brought about his failure to continue as the Congress president. Gandhi spelt out two differences with Bose after the AICC meeting at Calcutta was over. First, he did not support Bose's proposed ultimatum to the British Government and his view that the situation was then ripe 'for throwing a challenge to the Government'. Gandhi said, 'I feel that it is impossible to inaugurate and to conduct a non-violent campaign today. We have no control on those who believe in violence. Rampur, Ramdurg and Cawnpore are the pointers. Pantji had little non-violent control of the situation in Cawnpore and the other cities in UP'. Secondly, Gandhi held that Bose did not share the former's view that corruption was rampant within Congress organization.¹⁶¹

After resigning, on 3 May 1939, Bose announced the formation of a new party called the Forward Bloc, saying that it would function within the Congress and work for rallying 'all radical and anti-imperialist progressive elements in the country on the basis of a minimum programme, representing the greatest common measure of agreement among radicals of all shades of opinion'.¹⁶² Bose spelt out two differences with the official bloc of the Congress; first, the Forward Bloc desired to work the existing programme of the Congress not with a reformist or moderate mentality but with a revolutionary mentality; secondly, the Forward Bloc had an advanced programme, i.e it aimed at the early attainment of independence.¹⁶³

In forming the Forward Bloc, Subhas Chandra Bose had two expectations: 'Firstly, in the event of a future conflict with the Gandhi Wing, he [Bose] would be able to fight more effectively, and could hope to win the entire Congress to his point of view one day; secondly, even if he failed to win over the entire Congress to his point of view, he could, in any

major crisis, act on his own, even if the Gandhi Wing failed to rise to the occasion.¹⁶⁴ The immediate objective of the Forward Bloc was 'un-compromising struggle with British imperialism for winning India's independence', without being hampered by the Gandhian doctrine of non-violence.

Bose failed to get wholehearted support from the Congress left-wingers to his new party. During his discussion with Nehru in April 1939, the latter had opposed the idea of the formation of such a party as it would create a split in the Congress and 'weaken the national organisation at a critical moment'.¹⁶⁵ The Congress Socialist leaders like Acharya Narendra Deva and Jayaprakash Narayan were not inclined to support the Forward Bloc, though Bose hoped that, even if the Congress Socialist Party did not join his Bloc, it would give permission to its members to join it individually, otherwise, he thought, the Socialist Party would be weakened.¹⁶⁶ Criticizing the objectives of the Forward Bloc, Jayaprakash Narayan said in a meeting at Patna on 8 June 1939: 'The Congress is not a parliament where opposing parties must try to oust one another from power. It is a "front" the unity of which must not be impaired.'¹⁶⁷ Acharya Narendra Deva, in a Socialist Conference at Delhi on 2 July 1939, made an appeal to the socialists not to weaken the Congress but to protect the organization from those who wanted to undermine its influence and prestige.¹⁶⁸

The constitution of the Forward Bloc made it clear that it would function as a platform within the Congress party. According to its constitution only primary members of the Congress were eligible for membership of the Forward Bloc. The first All-India Conference of the Forward Bloc was held in Bombay on 22 June 1939. This conference succeeded in achieving a union of the leftist forces in the country by forming a Left Consolidation Committee. Bose later claimed that, as a result of the formation of this committee, the leftists could present 'a united and organised front' at the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, which was also held in Bombay towards the close of June 1939 and 'prevent several changes being enacted in the Congress constitution, on which the rightists were known to be very keen'.¹⁶⁹

But the AICC passed two resolutions at Bombay which Bose regarded as anti-leftist in character. One prohibited any form of satyagraha by Congressmen without the permission of the Provincial Congress Committee. The other said: 'In matters of policy, if there is a difference between the ministry and the PCC [Provincial Congress Committee], reference should be made to the Parliamentary Board.'¹⁷⁰ As Bose was thinking of immediate agitation against the government, he regarded the two resolutions as a stumbling block. Already under his leadership in Bengal (he was the President of the Bengal Pradesh Congress

Committee) the District Conference at Jalpaiguri had planned to give a six months notice to the British Government, threatening therein to launch mass civil disobedience if their demand was not accepted within the same period. Bose wanted the Left Consolidation Committee to observe 9 July as an all-India day of protest against these two AICC resolutions. In a telegram to Bose, Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, expressed his surprise over the former's plan for observing a protest day against the AICC resolutions, which was violation of party discipline.¹⁷¹ Bose claimed it to be his 'constitutional and democratic' right to protest and mobilize Congress opinion against the two resolutions.¹⁷²

Gandhi fully supported the AICC resolutions because he thought that if any mass movement was undertaken at that time even in the name of non-violence, it would resolve itself into violence.¹⁷³ He was advising the political prisoners in Dum Dum and Alipore jails not to resort to a hunger strike for fear that this would worsen the situation.¹⁷⁴ But demanding release, the political prisoners started their hunger strike on 6 July. On 16 July, the Bengal Provincial Congress, under the leadership of Bose, organized a demonstration to express sympathy for them.¹⁷⁵

In the meantime, differences of opinion arose among the constituents of the Left Consolidation Committee. The Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy refused to participate in the observance of the protest day.¹⁷⁶ Jayaprakash Narayan observed in a meeting at Peshawar on 10 July 1939:

We Socialists do not want to create factions in the Congress nor do we desire to displace the old leadership of Congress and establish rival leadership. We are only concerned with the policy and programme of Congress. We only want to influence the Congress decisions. Whatever our differences with the old leaders, we do not want to quarrel with them. We all want to march shoulder to shoulder with them in our common fight against imperialism.¹⁷⁷

The Left Consolidation Committee was to break up within the coming months. In October 1939, the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party announced in Lucknow that their party would not follow the directives of the Left Consolidation Committee and would act on its own.¹⁷⁸ The National Front, another constituent of the Left Consolidation Committee, called the Forward Bloc counter-revolutionary, and therefore refused to collaborate with it.¹⁷⁹ The National Front also made it clear to the Forward Bloc that if a national struggle was launched by the latter, independently of the Congress, the National Front would resist and denounce it.¹⁸⁰ By the end of 1939, the Forward Bloc and Kisan Sabha were the only two parties left in the Left Consolidation Committee.

The action of Subhas Chandra Bose in observing a day of protest against the AICC resolutions was regarded by the Congress authorities as 'grave indiscipline'. On 11 August the Congress Working Committee declared

Bose disqualified for the presidentship of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee and membership of any elective Congress Committee for three years with effect from August 1939.¹⁸¹

Bose described this decision of the Congress Working Committee as 'the logical consequence of right consolidation which has been going on in the last few years and which has been accentuated by the acceptance of ministerial offices in the provinces'. He called upon the leftist forces to unite so as to bring about 'a change in the mentality that is pervading the Congress organisation at present'.¹⁸² M.N. Roy, the leader of the Radical Democratic Party, held that the Congress Working Committee's decision against Bose was unwise and would create difficulties.¹⁸³ Jayaprakash Narayan observed: 'It [the Congress Working Committee's action against Bose] would further widen instead of narrowing the gulf in the Congress organisation although unity is the supreme need at the present juncture.'¹⁸⁴

On 17 August, Rajendra Prasad declared the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee null and void. But the BPCC continued to defy the Congress Working Committee and on 30 August passed a resolution expressing confidence in the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose.¹⁸⁵ After the disciplinary action was taken against Bose, Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad continued to receive uncharitable letters. In the *Harijan* of 26 August 1939, Gandhi admitted that he had drafted the Working Committee's resolution against Bose and held that the action was justified:

He [Subhas Chandra Bose] has pitted himself against the Working Committee, if not the Congress Organisation. The members of the Working Committee, therefore, had to perform their duty and leave the Congressmen and the public to judge between themselves and Subhas Babu. It has been suggested that Subhas Babu has done what I would have done under similar circumstances. I cannot recall a single instance in my life of having done what Subhas Babu has done, i.e., defied an organisation to which I owed allegiance. I could understand rebellion after secession from such an organisation. That was the meaning and secret of the non-violent non-cooperation of 1920.

Although Bose attributed the 'disciplinary action' against him to the 'right consolidation' within the Congress party, he could not carry the entire Left with himself, because not only were the leftist forces divided into different groups but also because they were keen on maintaining the united front against the British. Bose's conflict with the Congress right-wing and Gandhi cannot also be regarded as a clear ideological conflict. There seem to be two grounds for the latter's opposition to the former. The right-wingers disapproved Bose's aspersions on them and his defiance of Gandhi's authority. So far as Gandhi was concerned, he was dead against Bose's plan of immediate civil disobedience.

8. The Outbreak of the Second World War

The Second World War commenced in Europe with the declaration of war on Poland by the German Fuhrer, Hitler, on 1 September 1939. On 3 September, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, proclaimed India a belligerent against Germany without consulting the popular governments in the provinces and the popular representatives in the central legislature. Soon after the outbreak of war, the leftists, i.e. the Congress Socialists, the Forward Bloc and the Communists started anti-war and anti-government propaganda. The Forward Bloc, under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose, carried on its propaganda for launching civil disobedience against the British Government. In the meeting of the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha on 8 August 1939, Bose [he was present in the meeting as an invitee] urged the Congress to start a civil disobedience movement immediately against the British Government.¹⁸⁶ In his lecture tours throughout the country, Bose continued to urge that, as the British Government was in serious difficulties due to the war, the golden opportunity for a civil disobedience movement had arrived. In a large public meeting held at Nagpur on 13 September, Bose said that by accepting office the Congress had imbibed a parliamentary mentality and forgotten the idea of freedom. He alleged that Mahatma Gandhi was being deceived by a small circle of followers into the belief that the country was not prepared for another civil disobedience movement.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Gandhi viewed the situation arising out of the war from a different angle. He was full of 'humanitarian' sympathy for England and France in their life-and-death struggle against Nazi Germany. He stood for unconditional moral support to Great Britain. Official reports indicate that other than the leftists, the Congressmen in general were sympathetic towards the British. Pattabhi Sitaramayya observes that though all sections of the Congress were 'united by a common anti-war effort programme', 'the cautious and graduated steps adopted by the Congress' earned 'for the great national organisation the ill-deserved remark that it was not anti-British'.¹⁸⁸ In such a situation, Jawaharlal Nehru gave the Congress Working Committee the idea that, before formulating its war policy, the Congress should ask the British Government to declare its war aims. The resolution, adopted by the Congress Working Committee on 14 September 1939, which was drafted by Nehru, protested against the dragging of India into war without 'the consent of the Indian people' and made it clear that India could not associate herself in a war, said to be for democratic freedom, 'when that very freedom is denied to her'. 'If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy,' the resolution said, 'then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution

through a constituent assembly without external interference.' 'A free and democratic India,' it was pointed out in the resolution, 'will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation.'

The Working Committee declared that it could not offer its co-operation in the war, if the war was being carried on for consolidating imperialism 'in India and elsewhere'. The committee invited the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what were their war aims with regard to democracy and imperialism and how those aims were going to apply to India.¹⁸⁹

The viceroy, in his statement of 17 October 1939, proclaimed that dominion status, as enunciated by a former viceroy, Lord Irwin, in 1929, was the ultimate objective of the British Policy in India, but the future constitutional set-up of India was to be decided at the end of the war in consultation with various 'communities, parties and interests'. During the period of war the viceroy sought to enlist the co-operation of Indian leaders in the war effort by forming a consultative group.¹⁹⁰

The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha on 22 October 1939, considered the viceroy's declaration as 'an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy' to use the minorities' claims to block the country's advance towards independence. As a mark of protest against the viceroy's declaration, the Congress Working Committee refused to co-operate with the government war effort and asked the Congress ministries in the provinces to resign.¹⁹¹

By 15 November, all the Congress ministries in the provinces had resigned, passing resolutions in the legislatures in protest against the declaration of war by the viceroy without consulting the provincial governments and the reluctance of the British Government to give India independence.

The resignation of the Congress ministries in the provinces marked the beginning of a fresh phase of non-cooperation with the British Government. While the radical elements within the party were in a rebellious mood, the Congress High Command, under Gandhi's leadership, still hoped for an honourable settlement with the British Government on the basis of 'an acceptable declaration of war aims about India'. Gandhi ruled out the possibility of launching a civil disobedience movement, so long as the viceroy was 'exploring the possibilities of a settlement', and the Muslim League blocked the way, and discipline and unity had not been fully established in the Congress ranks.¹⁹² But the Congress leaders' negotiations with the British Government and Muslim League revealed that there was hardly any meeting ground between the Congress and the British and the Congress and the Muslim League.

British policy and the Congress hopes were irreconcilable. Congress

demanding an unequivocal declaration of Indian independence and a British recognition of the Indians' right to decide the future constitutional set-up of India and to settle minority claims through a constituent assembly whose members would be elected on the basis of adult suffrage and separate electorates for the minorities. The Congress leaders, notably Gandhi, Nehru and Rajagopalachari, regarded a constituent assembly as the only solution for the deadlock between the British Government and the Indian political parties. Gandhi regarded a constituent assembly as a remedy 'for our communal and other distempers' and 'a vehicle for mass political and other education'.¹⁹³ The British Government adhered to its offer of dominion status, to be conceded after the war, on the basis of agreement among the different communities and interests.

On 1 November 1939, the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, held discussions with Gandhi, the Congress president, Rajendra Prasad, and the Muslim League leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The next day, the viceroy, in his letter to both of them, suggested the formation of coalition ministries of the Congress and the Muslim League in the provinces and asked them to prepare a scheme according to which the representatives of the Congress, the Muslim League and other political parties would be nominated to the Viceroy's Executive Council on an ad hoc basis during the period of war.¹⁹⁴ In reply to the viceroy's letter, Rajendra Prasad pointed out that it would not be possible for the Congress to co-operate in the implementation of such subsidiary proposals as coalition with the Muslim League in the provinces and appointment of Congress members to the Viceroy's Executive Council, unless the vital question of the British Government's war aim with regard to India was clarified. The Congress president alleged that the viceroy was clouding the main issue by dragging in the communal question, i.e. making the settlement of the communal problem a pre-condition for the determination of India's future constitutional status. He held that the communal question 'does not in any respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom'.¹⁹⁵ In his statement of 5 November 1939, the Viceroy professed 'profound disappointment' over his discussion with the Congress and Muslim League leaders. He said that no inclusion of the Indian leaders in the Viceroy's Executive Council was possible due to the 'gulf that existed between the attitudes of these two great parties', i.e. Congress and Muslim League. He said: 'We have been unable to go further than the consultative group because of the lack of proper agreement between the major communities such as would contribute to harmonious working in the centre.'¹⁹⁶

In reaction to the viceroy's statement, Gandhi declared, on 8 November 1939: 'No solution is possible unless an acceptable declaration of war aims about India is forthcoming.' Gandhi read in the viceroy's statement

the language of imperialism and found no indication of 'a clear break with past' or a respect for the prevailing sentiments of nationalist India. He pleaded that the old imperialistic policy of 'playing the minorities against the so-called majority', inevitable though it was in any system of imperialism, be given up. He suggested that the minorities problem should be left to be solved by the constituent assembly. Gandhi pointed out that an immediate declaration of Indian independence would pave the way for an interim arrangement for the Congress party's participation in the government.¹⁹⁷ Though the viceroy's statement disappointed Gandhi, yet he urged Congressmen to seek to attain their goal of a constituent assembly through peaceful negotiation. On 19 November, Gandhi wrote that, if a constituent assembly could not be attained by negotiation, direct action might become the 'necessary prelude' to its attainment.¹⁹⁸

The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting held at Allahabad during 19–23 November 1939, echoed the views of the Congress president and Gandhi. The Working Committee alleged that the British Government's reluctance to clarify its war aim with regard to India clearly indicated that the British were fighting the war for an 'imperialistic end' and had no desire to give India independence. The Working Committee offered to extend its co-operation in the war effort if the British recognized India's independence and 'the right of her people to frame their constitution through a constituent assembly'. The Working Committee held that the rights of the minorities were being pleaded only to block India's freedom, and that a constituent assembly, formed on the basis of adult suffrage and including representatives of the minorities on the basis of separate electorates proportional to their numerical strength, would be competent to solve the communal problem. It was held in the Working Committee's resolution that the Constituent Assembly would safeguard the rights of 'accepted minorities' to their satisfaction and that if there was disagreement on any matter of minority protection between the minority representatives and the rest of the constituent assembly, the matter would be referred to arbitration.¹⁹⁹

In the Gandhian spirit, at Allahabad, the Working Committee resolved to carry on efforts for an honourable settlement with the British Government because 'while a *Satyagrahi* is ever ready for a non-violent fight, if it has to come, he never relaxes his efforts for peace and always works for its attainment'. The Working Committee called upon Congressmen to carry on their preparation for a civil disobedience movement by promoting khadar and communal harmony.²⁰⁰

In the meantime, the Congress leaders had carried on their efforts for an understanding with the Muslim League and its leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The Muslim League and Jinnah claimed the sole right to

represent the Muslims of India and professed profound distrust of the Congress. Jinnah held that under the Congress ministries, the Muslims had been oppressed and assailed by the Hindu majority. Though the Muslim League was not opposed to the independence of India, it demanded adequate safeguards for the Muslims against what it called 'the domination of the Hindu majority' and the 'vassalisation of Muslim India' as a condition for the independence of India.²⁰¹ In a letter to Muhammad Ali Jinnah dated 5 October 1939, the Congress president, Rajendra Prasad, described the Muslim League's charges against the Congress ministries as 'unfounded' and 'based on misapprehension', and suggested that the Chief Justice of the Federal Court be requested to inquire into those charges.²⁰² Jinnah replied that he had placed 'the whole case' before the viceroy whom he regarded as 'the proper authority to take such action and adopt such measures as would meet our requirements and would restore complete sense of security and satisfaction amongst the Mussalmans in those provinces where the Congress ministries are in charge of administration'.²⁰³ Subsequently, Jinnah suggested that the Muslim League's charges might be investigated by a Royal Commission.

In spite of Jinnah's open expression of distrust of the Congress, the Congress leaders carried on negotiations with him. An invitation to the meeting of the Congress Working Committee in September had been turned down by Jinnah. Early in October Nehru met Jinnah. Immediately after the announcement of Lord Linlithgow's 17 October offer, Nehru appealed to Jinnah in a letter to express a 'strong disapproval' of the viceroy's offer as Nehru felt that 'Our dignity and self-respect as Indians have been insulted by the British Government.'²⁰⁴ Towards the end of October, Gandhi, Nehru and Rajendra Prasad met Jinnah and assured him that, since the constituent assembly would be constituted on the basis of widest possible franchise and separate representation for the minorities, the interest of the Muslims would be fully safeguarded. Jinnah had no sympathy for the idea of a constituent assembly, which, he held, would be dominated by the Congress. In his presidential address to the Lahore session of the All India Muslim League, held on 22 March 1940, Jinnah said:

May I point out to Mr Gandhi and to the Congress that you are fighting for a Constituent Assembly. . . . about which the Mussalmans say that they will never be able, in that way by the counting of heads, to come to any agreement which will be real agreement from the hearts, which will enable us to work as friends and therefore this idea of a Constituent Assembly is objectionable, apart from other objections.

Jinnah expressed the view that the minority protection provisions which might be decided either by a constituent assembly or by a tribunal would

be practically unenforceable, if the British parted with their power.²⁰⁵ Jinnah wrote to the viceroy on 11 November 1939 that his discussions with the Congress leaders had ended in a fiasco, because the latter were not willing to discuss the question of the reconstruction of provincial and central governments until the British Government complied with the Congress Party's demand for a declaration of India's freedom.²⁰⁶ On 2 December, Jinnah appealed to the Muslims of India to observe 22 December 'as the Day of Deliverance' and thanksgiving as a mark of relief that the Congress regime has ceased to function'. Jinnah called upon the Mussalmans to hold meetings and pass resolutions saying that 'the Congress ministry has failed to safeguard the rights and interests of the Mussalmans and other minorities and interests'.²⁰⁷

The Congress leaders regarded Jinnah's charges against the Congress ministries as 'entirely false' and 'baseless'. Jinnah's charges were criticized in the nationalist press. In Orissa, the nationalist Oriya daily *Samaj* published on this occasion the relevant speeches of the Congress leaders and the commendations of the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and some provincial governors to prove that Congress had always tried to deal with the Muslim community fairly. The *Samaj* called upon the viceroy and the governors to refute Jinnah's charges, because, according to the constitution, the protection of the minorities was the responsibility of the viceroy and governors.²⁰⁸ In a statement to the press on 14 December, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel expressed surprise at the 'conspiracy of silence' on the part of the viceroy and governors on the allegations of the Muslim League which were as much against them as against Congress.²⁰⁹ Gandhi held that, though the Muslim League was the largest political organization representing the Muslims, there were several Muslim bodies which denied its claim to represent them and that a constituent assembly would represent them all.²¹⁰

Other than the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the 'depressed class' followers of B.R. Ambedkar, the National Liberal Federation and the Democratic Swarajya Party, did not agree with the Congress Party's views on war and independence. Apprehending that the government would be mainly guided by the views of the Congress and Muslim League, V.D. Savarkar (the President of the Hindu Mahasabha), Sir Chimanlal Setalvad (the Liberal leader), Sir Cowasji Jehangir (the Liberal Parsi leader) and N.C. Kelkar and Jamnadas Mehta (the leaders of the Democratic Swarajya Party), wrote to the viceroy on 3 October 1939 urging him not to regard the Congress and the Muslim League 'as representing the whole or the bulk of India'.²¹¹ The Hindu Mahasabha²¹² and National Liberal Federation²¹³ criticized the Congress Party's approach to the war as a kind of 'bargaining' and stood for co-operation with the British Government in the war effort. Though Ambedkar's party refused to recognize the Congress as the representative of the

Scheduled Castes, yet another section of the Scheduled Castes, represented by the All India Depressed Classes League, recognized the Congress as the one single political organization in the country which had a legitimate right to represent the various communities and interests in the country.²¹⁴

On 14 December, Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State for India, made a statement in the House of Lords appreciating the resolution of the Congress Working Committee to carry on efforts for an 'honourable settlement' with the British Government in the spirit of satyagraha. But he also made it clear that no constitutional advance was possible without the assent of the minorities. He made a reference to the attitude of the All India Muslim League and said:

I would appeal to the leaders of the Congress as the largest and most powerful political organisation in India to endeavour to understand the difficulties which are responsible for the attitude of the All-India Muslim League. How great is the need for such an understanding is shown by the instruction issued a few days ago by the President of the All-India Muslim League to the Muslims throughout India to observe 22nd of this month as 'Day of Deliverance and thanksgiving that the Congress Governments ceased to function'.²¹⁵

Commenting on the statement of Lord Zetland, Jawaharlal Nehru held that, if minority rights were over-ridden by the majority votes in the constituent assembly, particular minority problems could be settled through agreements or independent arbitration of the League of Nations or the International Court at the Hague. He alleged that the British Government did not approve of the idea of a constituent assembly 'because such an Assembly necessarily puts an end to British imperialism'.²¹⁶

The statement of the Secretary of State almost ruled out the possibility of an agreement between the government and the Congress. 'Between the position of Indian nationalism and that of British imperialism,' said Nehru, 'there is no common factor. If the British Government is unable to agree to India determining her future, we are equally unable to agree to the British Government interfering in any way in such a decision.'²¹⁷ The British were always trying to befog the basic issues of constituent assembly and national self-determination by dragging in communal questions. As observed by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, though the statements made by the Congress High Command were followed by the statements either from the viceroy or from the secretary of state, yet 'in no case was the Government pronouncement a reply to the issues raised by the Congress in its resolutions and statements from time to time'.²¹⁸

Though the Congress demand was unacceptable to the British Gov-

ernment, the latter was anxious somehow to pacify the Congress so as to avoid a chaotic revolutionary situation. At this stage, early in December 1939, Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Labour Party leader visited India and tried to impress upon the Congress leaders that British public opinion was conciliatory towards Indian aspirations. Cripps met prominent Congress leaders, such as Gandhi, Nehru and Patel and accepted a memorandum prepared by Gandhi. Talking to press representatives at Anand Bhavan, Allahabad on 10 December, Cripps said that the British Parliament was taking greater interests in Indian affairs and that the influence of the groups favourable to India was increasing in the House of Commons.²¹⁹ In an interview with the Socialists in Bombay in mid-December 1939, Cripps said that even staunch Tories had begun to feel the necessity of reaching a settlement with India at an early date.²²⁰

The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha, which began on 18 December, criticized the 14 December statement of the secretary of state. The Working Committee alleged that he had sought to take the public mind off the central fact by referring to the communal question. The committee reiterated its faith in a constituent assembly. It held that the communal question could not be solved so long as the different parties looked to a third party through whom they expected to gain special privileges and that the question could be solved only through a constituent assembly.²²¹

At Wardha, the Congress Working Committee appealed to the people of India to carry on preparation for a non-violent struggle against the British Government, and attached special significance to the celebration of Independence Day on 26 January 1940. 'The Celebration,' the Working Committee resolved, 'must . . . not only be the declaration of our national will for freedom, but a preparation for that struggle and a pledge to disciplined action.'²²² A special pledge was prepared to be taken in the public meetings which were to be held on this occasion. It required the people to implement the constructive programme of charkha (spinning) and khadi, communal harmony and removal of untouchability as a preparation for a non-violent struggle to attain *purna swaraj* and 'to keep in readiness to respond to the call of Congress, whenever it may come, for carrying on the struggle for the independence of India'.²²³

The stress on the constructive programme, particularly spinning, in the special pledge prepared by the Congress Working Committee was criticized by the leftists. In a press statement Subhas Chandra Bose observed that the 'political significance', attached to spinning, and the manner in which it had been converted by the Congress High Command into a method of political struggle deserved unequivocal condemnation.²²⁴ Jayaprakash Narayan observed: 'We have never

accepted it [constructive programme] as the only or even as an adequately effective weapon in our struggle. Our views regarding these matters have remained unchanged.'²²⁵ Dr Rammanohar Lohia asked, 'Does Independence pledge necessitate belief in a social order which will be based exclusively on the *Charkha* and the present constructive programme?'²²⁶ Sampurnananda observed: 'If making it [constructive programme] an integral part of the Independence pledge means that we are definitely committing ourselves to a policy of village industries as opposed to mass production, then I, as a socialist, cannot accept it.'²²⁷

But Gandhi made it clear that he could not give leadership to the Congress in a non-violent struggle, unless a majority of Congressmen accepted the constructive programme and particularly spinning. To him, non-violence, in practice, meant bread labour:

Thirty-four years of continuous experience and experimenting in truth and non-violence [he said] have indeed convinced me that non-violence cannot be sustained unless it is linked to conscious body labour and finds expression in our daily contact with our neighbours. This is the constructive programme. It is not an end, it is an indispensable means, and, therefore, is almost convertible with the end. The power of non-violent resistance can only come from honest working of constructive programme.²²⁸

Ultimately, the leftists, in general, gave up their objection to the inclusion of the constructive programme in the pledge.

On 10 January 1940, in a speech at the Orient Club, Bombay, the viceroy said that the objective of the British Government in India was 'the attainment of dominion status of the Statute of Westminster variety'. He expressed his intention to expand his Executive Council and include a small number of political leaders in it. But he also referred to the communal question, the solution of which, he held, 'will result in the subsequent co-operation of all the parties and interests concerned'. 'We are,' he said, 'after all dealing not with one political party only but with many. . . .'²²⁹ On 14 January, Rajendra Prasad, the Congress president, pointed out that the Congress wanted complete independence and not dominion status of the Westminster variety, which the British Government proposed to give.²³⁰

On the eve of 26 January 1940, Gandhi issued a message to his countrymen, warning them that the celebration of Independence Day, which was 'an annual feature' of the Congress programme, must not be mistaken for the declaration of civil resistance, and should be 'an index of the discipline among the Congressmen'. He told them that, if there was going to be any civil disobedience in the future, it would be more civil and non-violent than any civil disobedience before, and would not include strikes and no-tax campaigns. In fact, Gandhi was conscious of

the gravity of the situation arising out of the war, and was still making desperate efforts for an honourable settlement so as to avoid a struggle.²³¹

The President of the Forward Bloc, Subhas Chandra Bose, criticized Gandhi for adopting a compromising attitude towards the British. The Allahabad resolution of the Congress Working Committee was criticized by Bose as 'licking the feet that kick' and as being intended to 'hoodwink and bluff' the country into inaction.²³² About such criticism, Gandhi made the following comment in the *Harijan*:

I am not spoiling for a fight, I am trying to avoid it. Whatever may be true of the members of the Working Committee, I wholly endorse Mr Subhas Chandra Bose's charge that I am eager to have a compromise with Britain if it can be had with honour. Indeed, *Satyagraha* demands it. Therefore I am in no hurry. And yet, if the time came, and if I had no followers, I shall be able to put up a single handed fight. But I have not lost faith in Britain. I like the latest pronouncement of Lord Linlithgow. I believe in his sincerity. There are undoubted snags in that speech . . . But it seems to contain the germs of a settlement honourable to both nations.²³³

Nine days after the celebration of Independence Day, Gandhi had an interview with Linlithgow at Delhi (on 5 February 1940). In a friendly spirit the viceroy told Gandhi that, subject to the consent of the parties affected, he immediately proposed to expand the Viceroy's Executive Council on the lines indicated by him the previous November, and also that the British Government were prepared to reopen the federal scheme of the Government of India Act, 1935, so as to expedite the achievement of dominion status and facilitate the settlement of the issues arising out of it, after the war.²³⁴ While appreciating the spirit with which the viceroy put forward his proposals, Gandhi made it clear that they fell short of the Congress Party's demand.²³⁵ In an interview with press representatives on 6 February, Gandhi spelt out the fundamental difference between the Congress demand and the viceroy's offer:

The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceregal offer consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates the final determination of India's destiny by the British Government, whereas the Congress contemplated just the contrary. The Congress position is that the test of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without any outside influence, and I see no prospect whatsoever for a peaceful and honourable settlement between England and India, unless the vital difference is obliterated, and England decides upon the right course, that is, accept the position that the time has come now when India must be allowed to determine her own constitution and her status.²³⁶

Gandhi contended that, once the British Government recognized India's

right to determine her own destiny through a constituent assembly, the question of defence, minorities, princes and European interests would resolve automatically. However, he still believed in the sincerity of Lord Linlithgow and said 'he is doing his best to understand us', and he had realised the 'wide gulf' that existed between the British Government and nationalist India.²³⁷

In an interview with the *Sunday Times*, on 11 February, Lord Zetland alleged that the leaders of the Congress suffered from 'the tyranny of phrases. 'Long range bombardment by leading personalities from platform and press,' he said, 'is little likely to lead anywhere. What is wanted is the escape from the tyranny of phrases and a descent from idealism, from the abstract to the concrete.'²³⁸ He held that the experience of working the Government of India Act, 1935, had made it clear that the problem of minorities had to be taken in hand by the Indians themselves.²³⁹ To this Rajendra Prasad replied: 'If we suffer from a tyranny of phrases, the British Government with all its vast experience of government of men should not suffer from it and should be able to boldly accept the Indian demand.'²⁴⁰ In reply to Lord Zetland's statement, Gandhi stated that the settlement of the minorities question was impossible 'without previous recognition of India's independence'.²⁴¹

'If Lord Zetland,' said Gandhi, 'represents the British Government's considered view, it is a declaration of war against nationalist India'.²⁴² The Congress was now definitely on the road to civil disobedience, though Gandhi felt that the atmosphere was not conducive to the launching of civil disobedience because of differences and indiscipline among the Congressmen and apathy towards the constructive programme.

On 28 February, the Congress Working Committee met at Patna to prepare the agenda for the forthcoming Ramgarh session. It resolved that Congress could not, in any way, directly or indirectly, be a party to the war, as that would mean support to the continuance and perpetuation of the exploitation of India by the British. The Working Committee disapproved of 'the drain from India of men and material for the purpose of the war'. The Committee also demanded complete independence, as 'Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism and dominion status or any other status within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India.' As regards the communal problem, it was resolved that no permanent solution of the problem was possible except through a 'Constituent Assembly where the rights of all the recognised minorities will be fully protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of various majority and minority groups or by arbitration, if agreement is not reached on any point.'²⁴³

The Working Committee drew the attention of all Congressmen to

Gandhi's declaration that he could undertake the responsibility of declaring civil disobedience when he was satisfied that they were strictly observing discipline and were carrying out the constructive programme as prescribed in the independence pledge.²⁴⁴

At this stage, there were queries from London as to whether the Congress had closed the door to negotiation. In reply to such queries, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* on 2 March 1940 that it was not Congress but the secretary of state who had closed the door for negotiation and compromise. In the same note Gandhi warned Congressmen about the nature of the struggle he would lead against the British: 'The fight, whenever it comes, will be strictly non-violent and, therefore, under severe discipline.'²⁴⁵

9. The Congress Policy towards the Princely States

While the Congress party formed ministries in the provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935, it had, almost simultaneously, to adopt a positive and activist policy towards the princely states. Till 1937, the Congress policy towards the states had been one of neutrality and non-interference, but thereafter, partly because of the pressure of the people's movements in the states, and partly because of the new politico-constitutional situation, created by the Act of 1935, it had to adopt an active policy of qualified interference.

The princely states, 563 in numbers, constituted 712,000 square miles of territory. According to the Census of 1931, their population (81 millions) was nearly one-fourth of the total Indian population. The states were not uniform in size and status. There were large states like Hyderabad and Kashmir whose rulers enjoyed wide powers, and small states like those of Kathiawar and Simla hills whose rulers exercised limited powers. Though these rulers had no freedom in external relations, in internal affairs they acted autocratically because they were neither restrained by the paramount power nor answerable to any representative institutions within their territories. Even though most of the princely states suffered from misrule and had a system of administration much inferior in standard to that of British India, yet the British Government, from 1858 onwards, consistently followed a policy of preserving 'the privileges, rights and dignities of the Princes', because the princes were regarded by the British as the bulwarks against rebellious movements in British India. In 1930, Professor Rushbrook-Williams, a British protagonist of the princely states, made the following observation:

The situation of these feudatory states, checker-boarding all India as they do, are a great safeguard. It is like establishing a vast network of friendly fortresses in a debatable territory. It would be difficult for a general

rebellion against the British to sweep India because of this network of powerful loyal Native States.²⁴⁶

In 1921 the British Government had instituted the Chamber of Princes as a forum in which the princes could be effectively set against the growing strength of the nationalist movement under Gandhi's leadership.

The Indian National Congress, from the beginning of the Gandhian movement had been appealing to the princes to reform their administrations. In 1920, the Nagpur session of the Congress earnestly requested 'all the Sovereign Princes of India to take immediate steps to establish full responsible government in their states'.²⁴⁷ In January 1921, the Working Committee of the Congress, in its meeting held at Nagpur, assigned to every Congress province 'all contiguous Indian State areas wherein the prevailing language is that of the Congress province'.²⁴⁸ The Calcutta session of the Congress, held in December 1928, urged on the rulers of Indian states to introduce responsible governments within their territories and guarantee 'fundamental rights of citizenship' to their subjects. This Congress session expressed its 'sympathy' and 'support' to the 'legitimate and peaceful struggle' of the people of the princely states for 'the attainment of full responsible government'. Almost the same resolution was reiterated by the Congress in the Lahore session of December of 1929.²⁴⁹

Though, theoretically, from 1920 onwards, the Congress continued to express its sympathy and support for the movements within the princely states for the attainment of responsible government and fundamental rights of citizenship, practically, the Congress policy towards the princely states remained one of non-interference. As the nationalist movement progressed under the leadership of Gandhi, the states' people also began organized movements to secure their political rights from the princely rulers. In some areas, contact between the states' people and Congressmen could be established, because the latter took shelter in the princely states and carried on their movement from there. In December 1927, Balwantray Mehta, Manilal Kothari and G.R. Abhayankar convened the first All-India States' People's Conference. This Conference resolved 'that for a speedy attainment of *Swarajya* as a whole, the Indian states should be brought into constitutional relations with British India and the people of Indian states should be assigned a definite place and effective voice in all matters of common concern in any new constitution that may be devised for the whole of India'.²⁵⁰ In March 1931, the All-India States' People's Conference, which had not been legally recognized by the British Government, submitted a memorandum to the Congress to represent its demands before the second session of the Round Table Conference. The memorandum demanded that the states should be admitted into the future federal constitution of India subject

to the fulfilment of the following conditions: the states should have the same standard of administration as British India; the states should be represented in the federal legislature by elected representatives of the states' people; the judiciary in the states should be integrated with the highest court of the federation and the federal constitution should guarantee some fundamental rights which would be applicable to the people of British India as well as the states.²⁵¹ In the second session of the Round Table Conference, Gandhi observed that the Princes should consider themselves as the trustees of their subjects and that there should be provision in the forthcoming constitution for fundamental rights, to be enjoyed by the people of British India as well as states, of which the Supreme Court would be the protector. But Gandhi also admitted in the Round Table Conference that, till that time the Congress had 'endeavoured to serve the Princes by refraining from any interference in their domestic and international affairs'.

The states' people's leaders were not satisfied with the stand taken by Gandhi on the states in the Round Table Conference. In an interview with Gandhi on 20 June 1934, a deputation of the All-India States' People's Conference, headed by its president, N.C. Kelkar, presented a statement to Gandhi, expressing the view that the National Demand put forward by Gandhi at the Round Table Conference did not include the demands contained in the All-India States' People's Conference's memorandum to the Congress, presented in March 1931. The statement demanded that 'the Constituent Assembly which is to draft the *Swaraj* Constitution for India after the White Paper is out of the way' should have representatives of the states' people on the same terms as the people of British India.²⁵² In a letter to Gandhi, Kelkar urged that, in view of 'the accession of strength' the Congress had received from the states in considerable numbers who were active Congress workers rather than 'sleeping partners', the Congress should put 'all weight and prestige' behind the states' people's efforts for self-emancipation.²⁵³

But in his reply to Kelkar, Gandhi upheld the policy of non-interference on legal and practical grounds:

The States are independent entities under the British law. That part of India which is described as British has no more power to shape the policy of States than it has (say) that of Afghanistan or Ceylon.

I wish it were otherwise, but I recognize my impotence in the matter. India of the states is undoubtedly an integral part of geographical India. But that carries us no further than where we stand today. Portuguese and French India are also an integral part of geographical India, but we are powerless to shape the course of events there.

We enrol members from the States in the Congress. We receive considerable assistance from them. It is not want of appreciation or will that compels our non-interference. It is our helplessness.

In this letter, Gandhi expressed the hope that the rulers would grant autonomy to their subjects and regard themselves as trustees for their subjects.²⁵⁴ Though Gandhi upheld the policy of non-interference, he was very sympathetic to the demands for reform made by the State's people and wanted Congress Committees to be formed in those states where circumstances permitted.²⁵⁵

On their part, the leaders of the states' people were expressing eagerness to identify themselves with the aims and aspirations of the Congress. In a resolution, passed on 12 August 1934, the Working Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference urged the Congress to modify its object in the following manner: 'The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of *Swarajya* by the people of India, including the people of Indian States, by all peaceful and legitimate means.'²⁵⁶ The leaders of the states' people's movements continued to carry on 'persistent efforts' 'to get a fuller declaration of the Congress policy' towards the States. The AICC meeting held at Jabalpur in April 1935, clarified the policy towards the states, saying that though the Congress was fully sympathetic towards the states' people's democratic movements, the party wanted them to shoulder the burden and responsibility of the movement for establishment of democratic systems of government within the states, as Congress had 'no other power under existing circumstances'.²⁵⁷

In reply to this resolution of the AICC which was issued by the Congress Working Committee in August 1935, an emergency meeting of the Working Committee of All-India States' People's Conference issued the following statement at Bombay on 11 August 1935:

We would like the Congress to declare in unequivocal terms: (a) that it considers itself free, juridically, to carry on active political work in the Indian states; (b) that it holds itself morally bound to carry on such work in the states as its resources will permit without any artificial distinction between two parts of India; (c) that it will recognize no other limitation upon this work than those of its restricted resources.²⁵⁸

As regards the Government of India Act, 1935, the Working Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference requested the Congress to declare:

(a) that in the Constituent Assembly when it comes to be formed, the states' people will be given representation on the same basis as the people of British India, and (b) that if the Constituent Assembly does not come to be formed, it will not accept a federal constitution which is not acceptable to the states' people.²⁵⁹

Some Congress leaders like Bhulabhai Desai wanted to carry on the

policy of non-interference even further than Gandhi. Bhulabhai not only upheld the Congress policy of non-interference but also advised the rulers of the states not to surrender any part of their sovereignty to the proposed federal government in the forthcoming constitution. He advised the subjects of the states to remain on friendly terms with the princes and secure from them responsible government gradually.²⁶⁰ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel did not consider it wise on the part of the Congress to carry on a simultaneous struggle against the British and the princely rulers. He held that once the British had gone, the princes would capitulate to the nationalist forces 'like apples falling from a tree when the trunk is shaken'.²⁶¹

The leftist elements in the Congress, whose strength and influence increased from 1934 onwards, advocated a positive policy towards the states. They stood for the abolition of the princely order. In his autobiography, Jawaharlal Nehru criticized Gandhi's trusteeship theory and advocated the abolition of the princely order. He regarded the princely states as 'probably the extremest type of autocracy existing in the world'.²⁶²

The federation scheme of the Government of India Act, 1935, which had given weightage and the right of nomination to the princes, led to the intensification of the people's movements in the princely states as well as to Congress interference in their affairs. Though the population of the states constituted one-fourth of the total population of India, in the upper house of the Federal Legislature, i.e. Council of States, the states had been allotted 104 seats out of a total of 260 (40 per cent of the total), and in its lower house, i.e. the House of the Assembly, 125 seats out of a total of 375 (33.3 per cent of the total). While the representatives of British India were to be elected by the people, those of the princely states were to be nominated by the rulers. The princes were left free to decide whether they would join the federation or not and it would be formed only if a sufficient number of princes opted for it. Thus the people of the princely states were denied the right of representation and enjoyment of civil liberties in the Act of 1935. By the middle of 1937, popular ministries had been formed in the provinces of British India under the Act of 1935. But the states' people were still groaning under autocratic governments.

Under these circumstances, the leaders of the states' people launched their movements for the establishment of responsible governments and guarantee of civil liberties in the states. In July 1936 the fifth session of the All-India States' People's Conference adopted the attainment of fully democratic responsible government by all peaceful and legitimate means as its objective and called upon the political organizations in British India to give up their policy of non-interference towards the

states and to 'assert their rights to work for the establishment of democracy and self-government therein'.²⁶³

So far as the Congress was concerned, it criticized the federation scheme because of undue and undemocratic weightage given to the princes, which sealed the party's prospect of sending representatives to the federal legislature from the states. The Congress, therefore, vigorously supported the agitation of the states' people's associations which were known as Praja Parishads or Praja Mandals. As observed by Professor Devaprasad Ghosh, 'In view of the approaching Federation and the Congress anxiety to capture the lion's share of the Native States' quota of representatives to the Federal Assembly such Praja Organisations had recently been made to spring up like mushrooms overnight, under Congress inspiration, practically all over princely India, from Kashmir to Travancore.'²⁶⁴

While some of the leaders of the states' people's movement, such as Balwantrai Mehta, Jamnalal Bajaj, Amritlal D. Sheth and U.N. Dhebar, were active Congressmen, Congress leaders from British India such as Gandhi (in spite of his advocacy of policy of non-interference), Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya Kripalani and Pattabhi Sitaramayya, were taking keen interest in the states' people's movements. The Congress ministries in the provinces also extended their moral sympathy and support to the people's movements in the contiguous princely states. During 1936 and 1937 there was deeper interaction between the National Congress and the states' people's movements. More and more people from the states were joining the Congress and Congress units were being organized in states, such as Mysore, Cochin and Travancore. The Faizpur session of the Congress was attended by 120 delegates from the Hyderabad state.²⁶⁵ Congress volunteers were going from Mysore to Madras presidency early in 1937 to campaign for the Congress candidates in the provincial assembly election.²⁶⁶ The Congress Independence Day was being celebrated in some princely states. In 1937, Congress leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik, K.F. Nariman and others visited some princely states and addressed the people.

As the states' people's movement gained momentum, the rulers adopted repressive measures. Towards the end of 1937, the repressive policies of the Mysore ruler drew the serious attention of Congressmen. In January 1937 the Mysore State Congress Parliamentary Board invited Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, the Congress Socialist leader of South Karnataka, to inaugurate the election campaign for the State Representative Assembly. She arrived at Bangalore on 16 January. The Government of Mysore served an order on her under section 39 of the Mysore Police Regulation, prohibiting her from making speeches in the Bangalore city

and within a radius of five miles for a period of six months.²⁶⁷ On 26 January the President and Secretary of the Bangalore City Congress were arrested for hoisting the Congress flag and holding a public meeting in defiance of the ban by the state authorities.²⁶⁸ Subsequently, the Government of Mysore issued a number of prohibitory orders under section 45 of the Mysore Police Regulation against which there were protests. On 19 August, the day on which three persons were to be tried for violation of prohibitory orders, about two thousand students of schools and colleges went on strike in Bangalore city and staged demonstrations outside the court of the city magistrate.²⁶⁹ On 21 August 1937 a hartal was organized in Bangalore city in protest against a prohibitory order. The Bangalore District Congress Committee and the Mass Awakeners' Union issued a joint statement denouncing the prohibitory order. On 23 August there was a students' strike in Mysore city.²⁷⁰

Thereafter, the agitation continued for some time, and the Mysore State Government continued to take action against persons taking part in it. When Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya again entered Mysore state on 9 September, the state police again served a notice on her, this time under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, prohibiting her from making speeches.²⁷¹ Under the pressure of the agitation, on 11 September, the prohibitory order under section 45 of the Mysore Police Regulation was modified. Thereafter, public meetings were held in Bangalore city in which the repressive measures of the Mysore Government were criticized. At this stage, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya again passed through Mysore state and addressed a political meeting in Bangalore city along with R.S. Hukavikar, General Secretary of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee, who had come from Dharwar for an interview with the Dewan of Mysore.²⁷² By that time as the Congress President, Nehru had written to the President and Secretary of the Karnatak Pradesh Congress Committee to carry on the agitation against the repressive policy of the Mysore state authorities.²⁷³ He advised the Karnatak Pradesh Congress Committee 'to avoid a conflict with the state authorities but at the same time not to submit quietly to their aggressive activities'.²⁷⁴ Nehru also wrote a number of letters to Sir Mirza M. Ismail, the Dewan of Mysore, urging him to ensure civil liberties to the people. He alleged that the Mysore Government was inspired by a 'spirit of hostility against the National Congress and the national movement' and asked the Dewan point-blank: 'I shall thank you . . . if you will kindly let me know whether Congress work can be carried on in its entirety in Mysore state.'²⁷⁵ In his correspondence with the dewan, Nehru emphasized the unbreakable link between and essential unity of British India and princely India,²⁷⁶ and advised him to introduce responsible government.²⁷⁷ The dewan replied that the state would not tolerate interference from outside but promised to make a public statement of

the state's policy at the opening of the 'Dasara' session of the State Representative Assembly.²⁷⁸ In these circumstances, the AICC meeting, held at Calcutta towards the end of October 1937, passed the following resolution:

This meeting of the A.I.C.C. expresses its emphatic protest against the ruthless policy of repression as indicated by the inauguration of various restrictive and prohibitory orders and political persecutions launched in the Mysore state and also against the suppression of civil rights and liberties by denying the elementary rights of speech, assemblage and association.

This meeting sends its fraternal greetings to the people of Mysore and wishes them all success in their legitimate non-violent struggle and appeals to the people of Indian states and British India to give all support in their struggle against the state for right of self-determination.²⁷⁹

This resolution was passed at the initiative of the Socialists. It was not favourably viewed by the right-wing Congressmen.²⁸⁰ Gandhi criticized the resolution on the ground that it was 'ultra-vires of the resolution of non-interference', and did not correctly set forth the state of affairs. He suggested that before proceeding to pronounce judgement on the state of affairs in Mysore, the AICC should have appointed a committee to ascertain the facts.²⁸¹

Even though Gandhi, in regard to the princely states, was adhering to the policy of non-interference, politically and psychologically the Congress leaders were becoming more and more involved in their affairs. The radical elements in the Congress who were strongly opposed to the federation scheme were actively sympathizing with the people of the princely states, who had been denied the right to elect their representatives to the federal legislature. Early in September 1937, Nehru, addressing a meeting in Baroda city, said that the Congress was the only body representative of India and that India was one and indivisible. He also said that Congress wanted to end the federation plan which had been designed to give the Princes a very prominent place in shaping the destinies of the nation.²⁸² In December 1937, Sardar Patel was addressing meetings in the villages of Baroda, telling the people that the policy of the Congress towards the states was to effect changes in their system of government and urging them to attend the Haripura session of the National Congress in large numbers.²⁸³

Before the Haripura session of the Congress, a convention of the States' People's Conference, held at Navsari on 15 February 1938, made a proposal to the Congress to amend Article 1 of its Constitution so as to clarify that India meant the whole of India, including the Indian States. The convention also suggested that the AICC should appoint a committee to inquire into the political and economic conditions of the states'

people in some selected areas and that the committee should submit its report to the Congress before the next session.²⁸⁴

The Haripura Congress endorsed the demands of the agitators of the princely states in the following words:

'The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the states as in the rest of India and considers the states as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The *Purna Swaraj* or complete independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India, inclusive of the states, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the States participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India. The Congress, therefore, stands for full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the states and deplores the present backward conditions and utter lack of freedom and suppression of civil liberties in many of these states.'²⁸⁵

The adoption of a new and activist approach towards the states, as contained in the above passage, was due to the pressure of the states' people's leaders upon the Congress. But so far as actual political action was concerned, the Haripura Congress upheld the earlier policy of non-interference:

Under existing circumstances, the Congress is not in a position to work effectively to this end within the states and numerous limitations and restrictions, imposed by the rulers or by British authority working through them, hamper its activities. The hope and assurance which its name and great prestige raise in the minds of people of the states find no immediate fulfilment, and disillusion results. It is not in consonance with the dignity of the Congress to have local committees which cannot function effectively, or tolerate indignity to the National Flag. The inability of the Congress to give protection or effective help, when hopes have been raised, produces helplessness in the people of the states and hinders the development of their movement for freedom.²⁸⁶

The Haripura Congress also felt that 'in view of the different conditions prevailing in the states and the rest of India', the general policy of the Congress was not suited to the states.²⁸⁷ It was decided that, though for the time being the Congress committees in the states would function 'under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee', yet the state Congress Committees could not engage in parliamentary activity or launch direct action 'in the name or under the auspices of the Congress'. It was also suggested that independent organizations should be formed in the states for carrying on internal struggles. The Congress advised the states' people to bear the burden of carrying on the struggle

for freedom, but expressed its 'moral support and sympathy' to such struggles, and permitted *individual Congressmen* to render assistance to the states' people's movement in their personal capacities.²⁸⁸

The months following the Haripura Congress witnessed an unprecedented awakening in a number of princely states and the greater involvement of individual Congress leaders as well as the Congress party in such movements.

The agitation in the Mysore state once again was to figure prominently before the Congress and the nation. On 1 March 1938, according to the resolution of the Haripura Congress, the Mysore State Congress Board and other Congressmen decided to form an independent organization called the 'Mysore Congress' to carry on parliamentary activities and an 'internal struggle for the establishment of responsible government in Mysore'.²⁸⁹ Though the National Congress as an organization did not want to be associated with state political organizations in connection with parliamentary and agitational activities, the Mysore Congress expressed its eagerness to be associated with the National Congress. On 12 May 1938, a number of persons from Mysore wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru, then a member of the Congress Working Committee that, 'Without direct contact with the National Congress and Mahatmaji, our new organization would never be able to touch the heart of the masses and would be a toy of the educated classes who would soon resume their quarrel over jobs.'²⁹⁰ The Mysore Congress continued to carry on its movement in the name of the National Congress in spite of the Haripura resolution. It used to hoist the flag of the National Congress.

The state authorities sought to suppress the movement with oral warnings and prohibitory orders. The District Magistrate of Kolar banned the hoisting of the National Flag and holding of meetings under Section 144. On 11 April 1938, the people of Viduraswatham village defied the ban order and held a public meeting which was attended by about 10,000 people. The police fired on the gathering. As a result, 32 persons were killed and 48 others injured.

This incident drew the serious attention of the Congress leaders. In a press statement, issued on 29 April 1938, Mahatma Gandhi suggested to the Maharaja of Mysore and his Adviser, Sir Mirza Ismail, 'to divest the Government of its autocracy and to make popular representatives responsible for the administration of Mysore'.²⁹¹ Sardar Patel and J.B. Kripalani went to Bangalore to negotiate a settlement between the Mysore Congress and the Mysore Government. As a result of the settlement negotiated by them, the Mysore Government recognized the Mysore Congress, agreed to consider the proposals for the establishment of responsible government, proclaimed general amnesty to political

prisoners and withdrew repressive measures. Regarding the flag controversy, the state authorities accepted the suggestion of Gandhi that the Congress National Flag should be flown with the state flag in all ceremonial functions, but in the functions of the Congress Party only the National Flag would be flown. On its part, the Mysore Congress withdrew the civil disobedience against the state authorities.²⁹²

The Congress Working Committee, in its meeting held at Bombay in May 1938, approved of the settlement between the Mysore Congress and the Mysore Government and congratulated the Maharaja of Mysore and his advisers for carrying out the settlement in the prompt manner. In this meeting, the Working Committee reiterated its old policy of non-intervention by resolving that the 'internal struggles of the people of the states must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress'. The Working Committee even suggested the avoidance of the word 'Congress' in the names of independent state organizations, obviously keeping in view the 'Mysore Congress'. The Committee expressed its friendliness towards the rulers of states 'in the hope that they will recognise the signs of the times and establish responsible government within their borders and otherwise extend and guard the liberty of the people under their jurisdiction'.²⁹³

In July 1938, the Congress Working Committee, in its meeting at Wardha, decided to place the state Congress committees within the jurisdiction of 'their respective Provincial Congress Committees'. In this meeting, the Working Committee passed a resolution congratulating 'the people of Mansa, Wala, Ramdurg, Jamkhandi and Miraj on the success they have achieved in their brave and non-violent struggle for the vindication of their economic and political rights'.²⁹⁴ The committee passed another resolution expressing 'sympathy for the people of Nilgiri State in Orissa on the non-violent struggle they have been carrying on against the regulations banning meetings, processions and the formation of associations within the State'.²⁹⁵

The Congress authorities continued to receive complaints of repression from Travancore, Hyderabad, Kashmir, Dhenkanal, Talcher and Sahawal. The agitators from the states appealed to the Congress for advice, guidance and help. On 26 August 1938 the Travancore State Congress started a civil disobedience movement against the state authorities who tried to suppress it by repressive measures. The State Congress alleged that, due to the Government's policy of repression and the abrogation of civil liberties, it had become impossible for it to carry on agitation in a constitutional manner.²⁹⁶ Mahatma Gandhi appealed to the authorities of Travancore State to allow the State Congress to carry on its agitation in a peaceful manner,²⁹⁷ and proposed an inquiry by an impartial outsider into the charges of repression.²⁹⁸ His proposal was

rejected by C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Dewan of the State. The AICC, in its meeting held at Delhi in September 1938, passed the following resolution:

The AICC note with sorrow and dismay the repression that has been going on in Travancore for some days. The evidence that has come to the Congress office, if it is to be believed, goes to show that the movement led by the State Congress is strictly constitutional and for a constitutional purpose, viz., attainment of responsible government under the aegis of H.H. the Maharaja. The repudiation published on behalf of the state is categorically contradicted by the spokesmen of the State Congress.²⁹⁹

The AICC recommended to the Travancore Government the adoption of following measures: the State Congress to be allowed to carry on the movement for responsible government in a constitutional manner; the appointment of a committee containing among others representatives of the State Congress to explore the possibility of granting responsible government; an inquiry to be conducted by a jurist of unimpeachable impartiality from outside into the recent happenings as well as charges made by the state authorities of provocations justifying state measures, including firing on unarmed people, resulting in deaths and injuries; and an amnesty to the prisoners.³⁰⁰

The AICC reiterated the policy of non-interference as 'an admission of the limitations of the Congress' and expressed the hope of converting the princes to 'the view that their true welfare consists in a voluntary surrender of power to the people'.³⁰¹

While the Travancore movement was on, movements also started in two of the biggest princely states of India — Kashmir and Hyderabad. In Kashmir, in spite of severe repressive orders issued by the state authorities, the Muslim Conference carried on its agitation. As the Dewan of Kashmir alleged that the Muslim Conference was a communal organization, directed against the Hindu ruler, on the advice of Jawaharlal Nehru, its name was changed to National Conference and Hindus were allowed to join it.³⁰² In Hyderabad the state people's leaders planned to start agitation against the Nizam's autocratic rule, and the practice of giving maximum weightage in the services to the Muslim minority at the cost of the Hindu majority. The Nizam banned the proposed State Congress on 7 September 1938 on the plea that it was going to be a Hindu communal organization against the Muslim ruler. In spite of the ban, the Hyderabad State Congress was formed and it started an agitation on 24 October 1938 for its legal recognition as well as establishment of responsible government in the state. According to official reports, though the State Congress claimed dissociation from the National Congress, in fact the State Congress leaders paid 'incessant' visits to the

Congress headquarters in British India to seek inspiration and advice and the Congress leaders in British India enlisted volunteers for their movement and guided the movement.³⁰³ The simultaneous agitation against the Nizam by the Hindu communal organizations like the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha created a delicate situation for the State Congress which, in spite of its Hindu predominance, professed to be non-communal. So, at the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders, the State Congress suspended its satyagraha on 23 December 1938 with the hope that the Nizam's government would release the civil disobedience prisoners, lift the ban on the State Congress and pave the way for 'the inauguration of a scheme of responsible government'.³⁰⁴

In Western India, Sardar Patel took active interest in the states' people's movements. Encouraged by him, Jethalal Joshi and U.N. Dhebar called, in March 1937, the meeting of the Kathiawad Rajakiya Parishad. This meeting, attended by 15,000 people, passed a resolution urging the princely rulers of Kathiawad to grant responsible governments to their people. By mid-August 1938, an agitation began in the Rajkot state. On 5 September, the Rajkot Praja Parishad met under the presidency of Sardar Patel. On behalf of the Praja Parishad, Patel put forth its demand before the Dewan of Rajkot, Virawala, for the constitution of a committee to draw up a scheme of responsible government, the holding of elections for the Rajkot Praja Pratinidhi Sabha, limitation of the ruler's withdrawals from the state treasury, reduction of land revenue, and cancellation of *ijarās*. On 25 December 1938, Dharmendrasinhji, the ruler of Rajkot, made an agreement with Patel. According to this agreement, the ruler proposed to limit his privy purse, set up a committee of ten state subjects or officials to recommend reforms in the government 'so as to give the widest possible powers to people', and the Praja Parishad withdrew its agitation. Under the agreement, the names of seven members of the said Committee were to be recommended by Patel. The agreement had been reached against the advice of the Political Department, which was virtually the ultimate authority for the states.

By the middle of 1938, the Prajamandal movement began in the Orissa States. Though the Prajamandal agitations in the Orissa States were basically movements of the states' people against their autocratic rulers, yet the prominent Congress leaders of Orissa such as Harekrushna Mahtab, Nabakrushna Chaudhury and Malati Chaudhury (the wife of Mr Chaudhury) took keen interest in them and the State Prajamandal leaders like Sarangadhar Das and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan were staunch nationalists. In the Second Orissa States' People's Conference, held at Cuttack, the then capital of Orissa, on 23 June 1937, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the President of the Conference, appealed to the Orissa States' people to form Congress Committees and come in line with their fellow

countrymen in British India. The Conference called upon the rulers of the Orissa States to confer upon their subjects rights of occupancy on their holdings and fundamental rights of citizenship. It also urged them to stop collection of unjust exactions like *rasad*, *magan* and *bethi*.³⁰⁵

This conference authorized its delegates to form People's Sabhas or Praja Mandals in their respective areas. A three-member committee was constituted with Sarangadhar Das as convener to investigate and report on the illegalities in the states. Though Sarangadhar Das continued to remain the convener or secretary of the committee, it was reconstituted by the Working Committee of the Orissa States' People's Conference in June 1938 with the following members: Harekrushna Mahtab (Chairman), Lalmohan Patnaik and Balwantray Mehta. In the meantime, prajamandals or people's associations were formed in different states.³⁰⁶

The All-Orissa States Enquiry Committee and local prajamandals became the channels for the expression of the accumulated discontent of the states' people. They now felt that they could voice their grievances in a forum instead of crying in wilderness as they had done earlier. In hundreds, the people came forward to give evidence before the States Enquiry Committee but the rulers not only refused to comply with communications from the Committee but also adopted repressive measures towards those who came forward to give evidence.

On 5 July 1938, 116 Prajamandal agitators were arrested in the Nilgiri State. Due to the harassment by the Durbar, the Prajamandal agitators of Nilgiri found it difficult to maintain their headquarters within the state and therefore made a village of the adjoining Balasore district on the border of Nilgiri their headquarters. From that village, trained volunteers were sent to Nilgiri by their leader, Guruchandra Das, a Congress Socialist.³⁰⁷

By September 1939, the prajamandal movement began in the Dhenkanal and Talcher States. In Dhenkanal, after the arrest of the agitators by the state authorities on 11 September, large crowds, armed with weapons, flocked to the state capital. The Durbar took stern measures to suppress the Prajamandal agitation. About 18 persons, including a twelve-year-old boatman boy named Baji Rout, were killed as a result of the police firing.

The Talcher Prajamandal, formed in September 1938, put forward the following demands before the Durbar: freedom of speech, assembly and association, abolition of *Salamies* and presents and forced payments, laws to ensure security of tenure to the peasants, abolition of monopolies, abolition of forced labour, amendment of forest laws, reservation of 85 per cent of jobs in the Talcher coal mine for the people of Talcher and the rest of Orissa, the right to strike and form trade unions in the coal mines and introduction of responsible government.³⁰⁸

29 October 1938 was observed as the All-Orissa Garhjat day in different parts of Orissa. Meetings were held on that day condemning the repressive policy of the princely rulers and the British policy of protecting them. The official report of 4 November made the following observation on the observance of the day:

A noticeable feature of most, if not all, these meetings is the fact that the British Government is described as the root of the trouble. The economic condition of the States' tenants appears to be forgotten and the whole agitation is apparently considered as part of the general struggle against the British imperialism.³⁰⁹

In fact, the prajamandal movement had become inextricably linked with the nationalist movement of the *Mogulbundi* (British-ruled) part of Orissa by the end of 1938.

By November 1938, the agitation in Dhenkanal became serious. The excited people, armed with bows and arrows, axes and lathis attacked the state police. The police resorted to firing on the excited mob on 2 and 11 November. As a result of the clash between the people and the police, a number of policemen and agitators were injured.

In the first week of December, the agitation against the Dhenkanal Durbar was launched from Cuttack by the Congress Socialist leader, Nabakrushna Chaudhury. Chaudhury resigned from his seat in the Orissa Legislative Assembly to launch the agitation in Dhenkanal. The Congress Socialists and the Youth League workers followed him. A party of the agitators, led by Chaudhury, was arrested by the Dhenkanal police on 3 December 1938.

On 24 April 1938, at Udaipur, the Mewar Rajya Praja Mandal was formed with the object of attaining responsible government by peaceful and legitimate means. In October, the satyagraha against the ruler of Mewar began in the towns of Mewar.

On 3 December 1938, Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*, calling upon the princes of India to grant responsible government to their subjects because he held that there was 'no half-way house' 'between total extinction of the States and the Princes making their people responsible for the administration of their states'. The princes, he wrote, should become trustees for the people, 'taking an earned commission for their labours'. He advised them to 'cultivate friendly relations with an organisation which bids fair in the future, not very distant, to replace the Paramount power'. Gandhi advised the provincial ministries to look into the misrule of the states and advise the Paramount Power how that could be removed.

The meeting of the Congress Working Committee, held at Wardha in December 1938, welcomed 'the awakening of the people of the Indian

States in many parts of the country' 'as a hopeful prelude to the larger freedom comprising the whole of India, for which the Congress had laboured'. The Working Committee was now finding it impossible to justify the policy of non-intervention: 'With the great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States, there must be an increasing identification of the Congress with the States people.'³¹⁰ Gandhi, the staunch advocate of non-interference, felt inclined to favour intervention by December 1938: 'It is impossible for me to defend it [policy of non-intervention] in the face of injustice perpetrated in the states. If the Congress feels that it has the power to offer effective interference, it will be bound to do so when the call comes.'³¹¹

By the beginning of 1939, the movement in the princely states had gathered pace and the whole of India looked with 'sympathy and understanding' on it. On 5 January 1939, an infuriated mob in the Ranpur State of Orissa stoned to death R.L. Bazalgette, the Political Agent. The Congress Working Committee deeply regretted the murder and appealed to the states' people not to resort to mob violence and to strictly adhere to peaceful methods.³¹² In the meantime, Jamnalal Bajaj, the Treasurer of the National Congress and the President of the Jaipur Praja Mandal, informed the Working Committee about the Jaipur state authorities' ban on his entry into Jaipur State and the declaration of the Jaipur Praja Mandal as illegal. He also informed the Working Committee about his decision to defy the ban and offer satyagraha. The Working Committee, therefore, passed the following resolution:

The Working Committee deplores the ban on the entry into the Jaipur state of Seth Jamnalalji by the Jaipur authorities whilst he was on his way to Jaipur, his native place, for famine relief work and to attend the meeting of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal of which he is the President. The Working Committee hopes that wiser counsels will prevail and the authorities will withdraw the ban and prevent an agitation both in the Jaipur state and outside.³¹³

Twice in January, Bajaj entered Jaipur in defiance of the ban and was arrested and expelled. The third time, when he entered Jaipur on 12 February 1939, the Jaipur Praja Mandal had launched a civil disobedience movement against the state authorities. Then the Jaipur authorities arrested and detained him for six months.

On 26 January 1939, agitation was resumed in Rajkot because the Durbar did not accept all the seven names recommended by Sardar Patel on behalf of the Praja Parishad. He accepted only four out of Patel's list, holding the view that the Rajputs, Muslims and Depressed Classes had not been represented in it. To suppress the agitation, the Durbar adopted a number of repressive measures such as the banning of

nationalist newspapers and meetings, imprisonment, fines and confiscation of property. The agitators were lathi-charged, terrorized and even tortured in jail. Distressed by the news of repression, early in February 1939, Kasturba Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi's wife) and Manibehn Patel (Sardar Patel's daughter) proceeded to Rajkot to offer satyagraha. But they were arrested and detained in a place sixteen miles away from Rajkot town. On 25 February Gandhi announced his decision to go to Rajkot.

In the midst of mounting agitation and tension in a number of princely states, the All-India States' People's Conference met at Ludhiana on 15 and 16 February 1939 under the chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Addressing the conference, Nehru denounced the princely order:

This system has vanished from the rest of the world and left to itself, it would have vanished from India also long ago. But in spite of its manifest decay and stagnation, it has been propped up and artificially maintained by British imperialism. Offspring of the British power in India, suckled by Imperialism for its own purposes, it has survived till today, though mighty revolutions have shaken the world and changed it, empires have collapsed and crowds of princes and petty rulers have faded away. That system has no inherent importance or strength, it is the strength of British imperialism that counts. For us in India, that system has in reality been one of the faces of Imperialism. Therefore, when conflict comes, we must recognise who our opponent is.³¹⁴

Nehru pointed out that the States were practically ruled by the Political Department of the Government of India.³¹⁵ He held that the time had come for integrating various struggles in the states with the major struggle against British imperialism.³¹⁶ 'Conflict in the States,' he held, 'is only incidentally with Rulers. In effect it is with British Imperialism.' He promised that the Congress would interfere in the states with full vigour, if the Government of India intervened to crush the people.³¹⁷ He remarked that in Jaipur the real ruler was not the maharaja but the English official who was the Prime Minister,³¹⁸ and that Rajkot affairs were being controlled by the Political Department.³¹⁹ He condemned the manner in which the armed forces were concentrated to terrorize the people of Ranpur after the murder of Major Bazalgette.³²⁰ Nehru deplored the autocratic system of government prevailing in two of the largest princely states of India — Hyderabad and Kashmir.³²¹

The Ludhiana conference condemned the Rajkot ruler's breach of the agreement made with Sardar Patel and 'the unwarranted interference by the Paramount Power in the internal affairs of States'.³²² The conference expressed 'its appreciation of and its gratitude to the National Congress and its leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi, for the lead they have given in the struggle of the States' people and for the part they are

taking in conducting them.' It was resolved that the time had come for co-ordinating the states' people's movements with the wider struggle for Indian independence and carrying on 'an integrated all-India struggle' under the guidance of the Congress. To achieve this objective the Standing Committee of All-India States' People's Conference was authorized to establish co-ordination with the National Congress.³²³

In the Tripuri session of the Congress, held in March 1939, President Bose emphasized the need for a more active policy towards the States. He said: 'Since Haripura much has happened. . . . In such circumstances should we of Congress not draw closer to the people of the States.'³²⁴ The Tripuri Congress resolution on the States held that the Haripura resolution on the states which 'was conceived in the best interests of the people in order to enable them to develop self-reliance and strength', had 'answered the expectations raised by it' and 'justified itself by encouraging the people of the states to organize themselves and conduct their own movements for freedom'. The resolution made it clear that the Congress had no legal inhibition about intervention in the States and that the policy of non-intervention was based only on practical considerations:

This policy [of non-intervention] was dictated by circumstances and by a recognition of the limitations inherent in the circumstances, but it was never conceived as an obligation. The Congress has always possessed the right, as it is the duty, to guide the people of the States and lend them its influence. The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation or to a complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States' people.³²⁵

The Tripura Congress authorized the Working Committee to issue instructions to Congressmen from time to time to build up close relation between the Congress and the states' people's movement.³²⁶

The appreciation of the Haripura resolution in the official Tripuri Congress resolution, which was moved by Rajendra Prasad, was objected to by Mrs Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and Achyut Patwardhan. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya held that the awakening that had taken place recently in the states was not due to the Haripura policy but due to such factors as the work by the States' People's Conference and progressive movements in British India. She moved an amendment to Rajendra Prasad's resolution, suggesting that Congress should be actively in charge of the movements in the princely states and create a machinery for directing and controlling such movements. Achyut Patwardhan supported the amendment.³²⁷ Replying to the debate, Rajendra Prasad said that Congress had always said less than what it had intended to do with

regard to the states, and that the Congress leaders such as Sardar Patel, Mahatma Gandhi and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj had already entered into the states' struggle without waiting for a resolution of the Congress.³²⁸ Consequently, the resolution was passed in its entirety and the amendment moved by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya was rejected.

While the Congress session was being held at Tripuri, Gandhi was preoccupied with Rajkot affairs. He arrived at Rajkot on 27 February 1939. On his arrival, Gandhi suggested to Dewan, Virawala, that the Praja Parishad nominees should constitute a majority in the Reforms Committee. He gave two alternative proposals for the attainment of that object: (1) one Rajput and two Muslim representatives might be included in the Reforms Committee, if the representatives of the Praja Parishad were correspondingly increased in the number, or (2) three official members should not have the right to vote. In the meantime, Gandhi visited the jails and heard the tales of atrocities on the imprisoned agitators. For two and half days Gandhi held discussion with the ruler of Rajkot, his Dewan, and British Resident Gibson. On 2 March Gandhi announced that if the ruler's original understanding with Patel was not honoured, he would undertake a fast unto death from 3 March. On 3 March, as Gandhi was commencing his fast, the ruler sent a negative reply to Gandhi's demand. On 4 March Gandhi wrote to Resident Gibson, asking for the intervention by the paramount power in Rajkot. Meanwhile cables came from different quarters to the viceroy, asking him to intervene. The Congress ministries in the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, and Bihar threatened to resign if the viceroy did not intervene to solve the Rajkot problem. On 7 March, the viceroy suggested the arbitration of Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India, to determine whether the ruler's agreement with Patel had actually been broken. On being informed of this suggestion, Gandhi immediately broke his fast and the imprisoned agitators were released.

Gwyer's judgement was announced on 3 April 1939 in which it was held that, as per the agreement, the ruler of Rajkot had undertaken to accept the names recommended by Sardar Patel and that he did not reserve to himself any discretion to reject those whom he disapproved. The judgement further pointed out that, unless the ruler could prove that any of the nominees were neither the servants nor the subjects of the state, Patel was entitled to have the last word.³²⁹ But in spite of this judgement, the Rajkot Durbar did not change his attitude. Virawala now insisted that when Gandhi first arrived at Rajkot he had agreed to the representation of Muslims and Rajputs in the Reforms Committee and that this agreement should be honoured. He further pleaded for the representation of the Depressed Classes. In the meantime, the Rajputs and Muslims of Rajkot staged angry demonstrations before Gandhi on 16 April, charging him with breach of promise and the ruler of Rajkot

rejected six of the seven nominees of Patel's list on the ground that they were not the residents of Rajkot and that representatives of Rajputs, Muslims and Depressed Classes had not been included among them. Gandhi carried on negotiations with the Rajputs, Muslims and Depressed Classes, but his negotiations bore no fruit, as Virawala had convinced those communities that the Brahmin and Vania Parishad representatives (all the seven Praja Parishad nominees belonged to Brahmin and Vania castes) would not safeguard their interests. At this stage Muhammed Ali Jinnah and B.R. Ambedkar intervened on behalf of the Muslims and Depressed Classes respectively and demanded separate representation for their communities. Under these circumstances, Gandhi renounced the award of the Chief Justice and publicly confessed his failure. He even admitted that his fast had been of a coercive nature, for which he apologized to all parties concerned with Rajkot affairs — the ruler, dewan, resident, viceroy and chief justice. On 21 May, in a ceremonial durbar, attended by Mahatma Gandhi and his wife on special invitation, the ruler of Rajkot announced the cancellation of previous notifications, restoration of confiscated property and money taken as fines, proclaimed civil rights and liberties for his subjects to be enjoyed within the bounds of the ordinary law, and announced the constitution of the Reforms Committee.³³⁰

In the meantime the movements were resumed on a larger scale in Travancore, Kashmir, Hyderabad and Limbidi. A very critical situation arose in the Talcher State of Orissa. Because of the unbearable oppression of the Raja of Talcher, thousands of people left their homes and took shelter in the refugee camps at Angul (situated within the British Indian territory of the Orissa Province). The people remained in the refugee camps for eight months. Through the efforts of A.V. Thakkar, Harekrushna Mahtab, Gopabandhu Chaudhury, Ramadevi (the wife of Mr Chaudhury), and the Marwari Relief Society, some relief works were undertaken for the people in the refugee camps. The Raja of Talcher remained adamant. The attitude of the raja was criticized even by the *Statesman*, the pro-British newspaper of Calcutta. Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* about the miseries of the people and asked the British Government to intervene. He asked:

Why is the ruler being humoured by the Political Department in his wholly indefensible attitude? Why is the welfare of several thousand refugees being lightly regarded? Is not the prestige of the Paramount Power being used to sustain the admitted evils? Surely there is something radically wrong somewhere in all this?³³¹

The growing pressure of the states' people's movements had, by mid-1939, resulted in considerably breaking down the artificial legal

barriers between British India and princely India and the Congress had openly come out to take up the cause of the people's movement in the princely states. Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 29 July 1939: 'It will be a mistake for the Paramount Power or the Princes to ignore the Congress, a body under whose shadow the people of the states from the commencement have been accustomed to grow and flourish. The Congress must guide them. How can people who are one in blood and bound together by the closest social and economic ties be artificially kept apart for any length of time.' 'No doubt,' he added, 'the Congress will have to recognise its own limitations. It can hope to work with effect only if its work is of a friendly and peaceful nature. It has to hold the scales evenly between the parties.'

The Congress-backed popular movements pressed hard on the princely rulers. A number of rulers such as those of Aundh, Cochin, Rajkot, Mysore, Kashmir, Hyderabad, Rampur and Jodhpur introduced constitutional reforms under the pressure of these movements. Of all the constitutional reforms, the liberal constitution of Aundh drew the utmost praise and appreciation of the Congress leaders. In Mysore the franchise for the lower house, i.e. the Representative Assembly, was lowered, resulting in trebling the number of rural voters.³³² In Hyderabad, 42 out of 85 members of the State Assembly and in Kashmir 40 out of 75 members of the State Assembly were to be elected by the people. But both these governments reserved the right of veto. Pattabhi Sitaramayya called the reform scheme of the Nizam 'pompous', 'pedantic' and mere 'window dressing' because of the lack of civil liberty.³³³

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the rulers expressed their solidarity with the paramount power and many of them used the war as a plea for 'introducing new and stringent repressive measures and putting an end to civil liberty' and deliberately postponing 'promised reforms'.³³⁴ The Congress Working Committee, in its 14 September resolution on war aims, criticized the princely rulers' stand in the following words:

The Working Committee have noted that many Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If they must make their profession in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order for which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.³³⁵

The Standing Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference

fully associated itself with the Congress Working Committee's resolution on war aims and criticized the princes in the same vein. To establish co-ordination with the Congress the Standing Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference, in its meeting of 10 October 1939, authorized Jawaharlal Nehru and Pattabhi Sitaramayya to represent it before the Congress Working Committee.³³⁶ Upholding the rights of the states' people, the Congress Working Committee declared in November 1939: 'The Princes are represented by and are the emblems of the Paramount Power in India. In the end it will be the people of Indian States who will determine what part they will take in a free India, though the British Government has consistently ignored their wishes in a matter which vitally affects them.'³³⁷

Notes and References

Abbreviations

NAI	: National Archives of India, New Delhi
NMML	: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
IOL	: India Office Library, London
CWMG	: Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
IAR	: Indian Annual Register

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Chapter IV

Preparations for Civil Disobedience January-September 1940

Bhupen Qanungo

FROM EARLY 1940, the Congress started organizational preparations for a country-wide satyagraha on lines laid down by Mahatma Gandhi. In the event, Gandhi did not give the signal for an upheaval, a mass satyagraha by Congressmen, till, in the autumn of 1942, he had finally satisfied himself that the Congress had done its best to obtain an honourable settlement of differences by negotiation with the British Government. For it was a basic teaching of Gandhi that satyagraha should be offered only after negotiations had failed and the prospective satyagrahis had prepared themselves reasonably well by Gandhian self-discipline and constructive work, so that, in their struggle for vindicating in a dignified manner India's right to freedom from British rule, satyagrahis would accept, with courage and fortitude, and without hatred towards the British people, physical suffering and mental agony, rigorous imprisonment, even death. Like violent wars, satyagrahas begin in the minds of men; non-violent struggles of the Gandhian type require long moral preparation by the leaders and their followers.

Gandhi greatly influenced events in these years of Congress history. As Jawaharlal wrote to Krishna Menon in March 1940, Gandhi was 'not a static factor or person' and his language was very different from the language of politicians, 'but the fact remains that he is a tower of strength for Indian freedom and his yeas and nays make a difference.'¹

Besides organizational preparations for an upheaval, the history of the Congress in 1940 and 1941 derive points of interest from three other factors also. First, considering their long term importance for Indian development, while they were out to abolish British imperialism in India and to keep a nation's tryst with destiny in passing to a new age of endeavour, Gandhi and the statesmen in the Congress Working Committee always devoted a part of their energies to the Congress constructive work programme and further deliberations on the question: What to do with power and independence once they come to India and Indians?

Second, there was in 1940-1 a campaign of Individual Satyagraha by representative Congressmen, a model satyagraha unsurpassed in discipline and glorious assertion of non-violence by Gandhi and Congressmen, though the political finesse of the campaign was lost at that time on all but few people who recognized the importance of respecting the mahatma's authority and judgement in a civil disobedience movement on behalf of the Congress. Third, from the spring of 1940, there was a marked intensity in the challenges posed by the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha to the giant nationalist secular party, the Congress, for controlling influence in Indian politics and on the development of India during and after the Second World War. This tripartite contention did not abate till after the partition of India in 1947 and the assassination of Gandhi by a communal fanatic in 1948.

1. The Pledge of 1940

The Independence Day pledge of 1940 is the best brief statement of the aspirations of Congressmen in the Age of Gandhi.

We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to Swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods, and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain Independence.

We pledge ourselves anew to the Independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry out non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained.

We believe that non-violent action in general and preparation for non-violent direct action in particular, require successful working of the constructive programme of Khadi, communal harmony and removal of untouchability. We shall seek every opportunity of spreading good-will among fellowmen without distinction of caste or creed. We shall endeavour to raise from ignorance and poverty those who have been neglected and to advance in every way the interests of those who are considered to be backward and suppressed. We know that though we are out to destroy the imperialistic system we have no quarrel with Englishmen, whether officials or non-officials. We know that distinction between the caste Hindus and Harijans must be abolished, and Hindus have to forget these distinctions in

their daily conduct. Such distinctions are a bar to non-violent conduct. Though our religious faith may be different, in our mutual relations we will act as children of mother India, bound by common nationality and common political and economic interest.

Charkha and Khadi are an integral part of our constructive programme, for the resuscitation of the seven hundred thousand villages of India and for the removal of the grinding poverty of the masses. We shall, therefore, spin regularly, use for our personal requirements nothing but Khadi, and so far as possible, products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise.

We pledge ourselves to a disciplined observance of Congress principles and policies and to keep in readiness to respond to the call of the Congress, whenever it may come, for carrying on the struggle for the independence of India.²

The Pledge of 1940 did not qualify the substance of the Pledge of 1930. The national statement of political goal found in the Pledge of 1930, affirmed and declared again in the Pledge of 1940, derived its essential inspiration of human rights, by subtle historical processes, through various agents, notably from John Locke's theory of rights, especially the right to revolt, the opening paragraphs of the American Declaration of Independence, and the ideas of the French Revolution, received through English education. The Pledge of 1940 was new, in as much as it had a distinct Gandhian satyagrahi tone in words and clauses added to the Purna Swaraj Pledge of 1930. It was the first significant step taken by the Congress organization in preparing itself in 1940 for a civil disobedience movement. The text of the new pledge had been drawn up by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) at Wardha shortly before the Christmas of 1939. Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Jairamdas Daulatram, Bhulabhai Desai, Shankar Rao Deo, Bidhan Chandra Roy, Profulla Ghosh, Harekrushna Mahatab and Acharya Kripalani attended at meetings presided over by the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari was present by special invitation, and Gandhiji found it convenient to observe the afternoon sittings throughout.³

The Working Committee's Wardha resolution on the observance of Independence Day clearly said that it had no desire to impose the new Pledge on unwilling Congressmen. 'Owing to the crisis through which India and the world are now passing and the possibility of our struggle for freedom being continued in an intenser form, the next celebration of this Day has a special significance attached to it. This celebration must therefore not only be a declaration of our national will to freedom, but a preparation for that struggle and a pledge to disciplined action.' The requirement of spinning regularly and habitual use of khaddar and khadi was irksome to all but strict Gandhians in the Congress. Subhas

Bose's Forward Bloc could hardly welcome 'the Gandhian Pledge'; and the Radicals, Communists, and Socialists in the Congress looked askance at the additions made to the familiar Purna Swaraj Pledge of 1930, because of their ideological implications.⁴

Returning from a week's tour in the north-western districts of the United Provinces, in his capacity of President of the Provincial Congress Committee, Jawaharlal issued on 15 January an explanatory statement on the new Pledge: 'These additions do not involve any confession of faith in any economic policy except the old policy of the Congress, namely encouragement of village industries, more specially the Charkha and Khaddar. This does not mean the exclusion of other methods of economic uplift.' There was no compulsion in regard to taking the new Pledge. 'Those who are prepared to take the first part of the Pledge only, that is the old form, may in their individual capacities do so. But it should be clearly understood that the Congress Committee has to put forward the full Pledge and cannot associate itself, as a Committee, with any other form.' 'It will be improper for one who does not accept the full Pledge, to take the lead in a public meeting in reading out the Pledge.'⁵

Instructions similar to those issued by Jawaharlal in the United Provinces were issued by Rajendra Prasad on 21 January, under the authority of the Working Committee, from Wardha where meetings were held from 19 January to 21 January. 'Any one not accepting any part of the pledge need not repeat the portion not acceptable to him.' On 22 January, Acharya Kripalani, the General Secretary of the Congress, advised all provincial Congress committees to translate into local languages and distribute widely the president's appeal and instructions regarding the pledge-taking procedure at 26 January meetings. Kripalani added a special warning: 'No effort should be made by Congressmen anywhere to organize a strike for any purpose on that day. This is in accordance with the traditions of the Independence day. It has never been a day of hartals and strikes.' On his part, Gandhi warned readers of the *Harijan* that 'the forthcoming celebrations must not be mistaken for a declaration of civil resistance'.⁶

Till about the third week of January it was doubtful whether Congress meetings on 26 January Day could be held in all parts of the country, particularly Bengal, without trouble with the police. In a letter to the AICC office at Allahabad, the provincial Congress committee of Bengal wrote from Calcutta on 4 January that many subordinate Congress committees in the province were seeking instructions in respect of observing the 26 January publicly: Perhaps you are aware that the Defence of India Act has practically prohibited all meetings, demonstrations etc. It may not be quite desirable to have the Independence Day celebrations after seeking permission from the Government — nor may

it be advisable to defy the Government order.'⁷ Fortunately, the government decided not to obstruct expressions of national enthusiasm on 26 January and lifted the ban on meetings for this purpose. Forward Bloc members were advised by Subhas Bose to use the 1930 form of pledge should they desire to hold meetings separate from those organized by the official Congress in a locality, but he warned that 'In no case should there be any opposition raised or any discordant note struck by the members of the Forward Bloc in meetings organized by the official Congress Committees where the Gandhian Pledge will be taken.'⁸ The umbilical cord connecting the Forward Bloc with the mother organization had not yet been severed.

In spite of an appeal by Jinnah to all Muslims to boycott the day, as usual Muslims and people of all communities and classes participated in the celebrations. At daybreak to awaken a village or town, there were *prabhat pheries* with group-singing on the roads; in the morning, Congressmen hoisted and saluted the tricolour. In the afternoon, there were processions terminating in meetings where speakers fully explained to the audience the implications of the pledge of 1940. After that, the chairman of the meeting administered the pledge, reading out the text paragraph by paragraph and the audience repeating such parts to which they had no objection. Much to the satisfaction of Congressmen, the day passed peacefully.

2. The Bengal Dispute

Who constituted the right and the left in the Congress in 1940-1? How bewildering, or intelligible, was the plethora of political and non-political organized groups on the Indian scene, in these years? For a witty description of such groups, drawn by a senior Gandhian who had been a professor of history before becoming a full-time freedom fighter, one may turn to an article, headed 'Genius of India', written by Acharya J.B. Kripalani at the end of January 1940. The following extracts will bring out a fact scarcely appreciated by many in free India today that, like other significant group in Indian public life in the past, the Gandhians worked with a sense of history, with an awareness that they were heirs of India's five-thousand-year-old civilization.

Gandhiji has been telling us for some time that the genius of India lies in non-violence in spite of the perpetual warfare sections of her people seem to have waged since the dawn of history. He tells us this is a superficial reading of history. A study of the inner springs of national action would confirm his contention.

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Where there are so many conflicting opinions, one more will neither resolve nor add to the confusion.

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Now my hypothesis is very simple. It is that if Indian history from the most ancient to the most modern times proves anything, it is that the Indian nation preserves everything and destroys nothing. As in the bowels of the earth, the depth of the sea, and the different folds of mountains, we have the whole history of India preserved for us by the genius of our people. Whatever is, is; the new is only one more layer added.

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Coming to the more recent times and confining ourselves to the political field alone, we have of course always with us the loyalists for whom the British Empire is as firm and unshakable as the Himalayas. Then we have our moderates now Christened as Liberals. We have the extremists turned into Congressmen. Then we have the Rightists and the Leftists. Among the rightists we have blind followers of Gandhi and the discriminating who discriminate between what they can conveniently do and what they can as conveniently avoid. Among the Leftists we have the Congress Socialists, the Communists belonging to the Third and the Fourth Internationals, with differences known only to the initiated and the esoteric. There is the Jawahar party with the membership of one. It is democratic and its influence is in reverse proportion to its numbers. The Royists are there with a programme which has never yet appeared. We have then the new Forward Bloc eternally threatening civil disobedience and eternally promising to fulfill its promise. Then there are labour, kisan and students' organisations of every colour mounting up to Red. Further there are the Nationalist Muslims of the Congress. Among the Muslims there is of course the League which claims to be the sole authoritative and representative organisation of all the varying and ever-increasing crores of Muslims in India. The Khilafat may be dead, but Khilafat Committee yet exists in India if in no other land. There are the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the Ahrars whose affiliations are to themselves only, the Sunnis, the Shias, the Momins, the Khaksars, the Agakhanis, the Ahmadias, and separate Muslim women, students and labour organisations. Among the Hindu all orthodoxies, all heterodoxies all castes and creeds have their separate organisations. There are the Hindu Sabha, the Sanatan Sabha, the Kanyakubja Sabha, the Gour Brahman, the Kayasthas, the Vaishns and the Agarwals, the non-Brahmins, the caste Hindus, the casteless ones, the Harijans of every variety, the Dravidians, the Arya Samajists the Brahmosamajists, all with their conferences and Congresses and Parishads. They exhaust the capacity to count. Then there are Sikhs, the Parsees, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians and the Europeans. They too have their appropriate organisations. Women and women students have separate conferences of their own. All together they are legion.

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The law of the survival of the fittest is out of place here. They all believe in the theory of live and let live.⁹

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The Congress lived and flourished largely on this theory of live and let live in the matter of groups within one all-India body of a secular, nationalist, democratic political organization, since its very inception at the end of the 19th century. Yet, from time to time Congress leaders

were obliged to adopt disciplinary measures against dissentients. The Working Committee under Rajendra Prasad adopted important measures of constitutional reform of the Congress machinery in 1939, and in January and February 1940 dealt firmly with the open revolt of the provincial Congress committee in Bengal. Reform and disciplinary measures were slow and deliberate, and their outcome, the disciplining of 'a fighting party' preparing for satyagraha under Gandhi, was watched with interest by organization men in the Congress and other politically minded Indians.

Leftist leaders in the Congress did not oppose the adoption by the Working Committee and the All India Congress Committee in June 1939 of four reforms in the Congress organizational machinery on the lines recommended by the Reform Committee (1939).¹⁰ These were: (1) the introduction of a rule of permanent membership only, to discourage thousands of occasional members enlisting themselves, on payment of four annas for ordinary membership, to become voters at the time of Congress elections; (2) the requirement that local Congress offices (in villages, *mandals* or circles, and towns) must maintain a register of permanent members of the Congress in respective localities; (3) a rule that for election of delegates to the Congress Committees (district, provincial, and all-India) a person would not be eligible unless he had been a member of the Congress for at least three consecutive years; and (4) provision for the appointment of a Provincial Election Tribunal and District Election Tribunals to ensure fair elections to Congress committees. The leftist leaders as well as those of the right and Gandhians generally did not welcome the phenomenal increase by lakhs in the number of Congress members following the setting up of Congress ministries in several provinces.

There was a provision in the existing constitution of the Congress authorizing the Working Committee to declare the members of any communal organization ineligible for membership of an elective committee of the Congress. A recommendation by the Reform Committee to extend the principle of such ineligibility to the members of any organization the objects of which were in conflict with those of the Congress was dropped by the Working Committee in June 1939, because it was known that the leftist Congressmen were strongly opposed to this recommendation. The leftists feared that a change of that nature in the constitution could make the Working Committee practically dictatorial in disciplining and eliminating dissentients ambitious to capture the Congress by working from inside, or using the Congress forum for obtaining a hearing from nationalists from all parts of India. Gandhi too opposed the reform proposed in this respect; he thought it would be unwise for the Working Committee to press for a constitutional amendment which was thus opposed by a section of Congressmen.

It was not with constitutional amendments adopted in June 1939 but with two notable policy resolutions adopted, at the same time, by the All India Congress Committee meeting in Bombay in respect of control over civil disobedience movements and provincial ministries of Congressmen which really got the Bengal dispute started — an open conflict between the Congress Working Committee headed by Rajendra Prasad and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee then headed by Subhas Bose. Passed by a large majority, in spite of opposition by Subhas Bose and some leftists, these resolutions were to the effect that, first, in the administrative provinces of India, no Congressman might offer or organize any form of satyagraha (and thereby get arrested just to spite a Congress provincial ministry or embarrass the Congress leadership), without obtaining the previous sanction of the provincial Congress committee concerned; second, there being a Parliamentary Subcommittee of the Working Committee for the purpose of guiding and co-ordinating parliamentary work by Congressmen, a provincial Congress Committee could not exercise direct control over legislators or ministers.

In August 1939, while taking disciplinary action against Subhas Bose, declaring him disqualified as president of the provincial Congress committee and to be a member of any elective Congress committee for three years, the Working Committee did not take action against the executive council of the PCC and other Congressmen for supporting Subhas Bose in organizing a protest day on 9 July in Calcutta, to deplore the AICC resolutions regarding satyagraha and central control over legislators elected to provincial assemblies.

On 30 August 1939, the PCC resolved to keep the post vacated by Subhas Bose vacant, and to transact business in consultation with him; in September they ignored a three-member Election Tribunal appointed by the Congress Working Committee, and elected for themselves a new president. In its meeting of December (18–22) 1939, the Working Committee appointed an ad hoc committee, with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as chairman, to make all necessary arrangements for Congress elections in the province. The executive of the PCC characterized this step by the Working Committee as unconstitutional, *ex-parte*, high-handed and unwarranted.

In January 1940, the PCC in Bengal practically pushed matters to the extreme limit but the Working Committee did not choose to act severely till after Independence Day. On 6 January the PCC had resolved to recommend to the Working Committee that the ad hoc committee headed by Maulana Azad be withdrawn, that the Congress elections in the province be postponed, that certain changes be made in the Independence Day pledge of 1940, and that they be permitted to launch,

on their own, a civil disobedience movement because normal working by the Congress organization had become impossible in Bengal, in view of government action under the Defence of India Rules against nationalists.

In its meeting at Wardha from 19 to 20 January 1940, the Working Committee dealt with matters of special interest to PCC members in Bengal, Utkal, and Punjab. With reference to the West Multan Rural Constituency in the Punjab Assembly bye-election, the Congress Working Committee said: 'The Working Committee of a province is not justified in threatening resignation because its recommendation is not accepted by the Parliamentary Sub-Committee.' Regarding the representation of Nabakrishna Das and the explanation of Nilkanth Das and Godavari Misra on the propriety of certain proceedings in the Utkal PCC on 22 December 1939, the Working Committee expressed its opinion that the rulings of the provincial chairman were not correct, and that he should have permitted a member to move for the consideration of the meeting the resolution expressing want of confidence in the executive committee headed by him. But further steps in this regard were not necessary in view of fresh Congress elections being held in Utkal as in other provinces. As to Bengal, the Working Committee observed:

The Congress committees in the province should carry out all their normal activities at any cost. . . . If they are prevented from carrying them out in Bengal by the Government under the Ordinance or the Defence of India Act, the BPCC is free to take any steps it considers necessary to meet the situation there. It should be clearly understood, however, that any steps taken by the BPCC is in vindication of the ordinary civil right of the organisation to function, and for that limited purpose only, and should not be regarded as a part of the general movement of Civil Disobedience for the attainment of the Congress goal.'

The Working Committee ruled that Congress elections in Bengal could not be postponed; the ad hoc committee would conduct elections, and a new Election Tribunal would consider and adjudicate, though the provincial Congress committee objected to these bodies. Under the Congress constitution, the Congress Working Committee could take away one (in this instance, the power of conducting elections in a province) or all of the powers of a provincial Congress committee, if necessary in the interests of the Congress. It was also open to the Working Committee to suspend a Provincial Congress committee.

In February 1940, the Bengal dispute became so bitter that, as a last resort, to protect its authority, the Working Committee moved to take disciplinary action against the Congress committee in Bengal. In reply to a telegram from Sarat Bose requesting a referendum of Bengal Congress-

men on the issue of superseding the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee which was an elective committee of the Congress, Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, stated that the Congress constitution did not provide for an appeal to referendum against Working Committee decisions, but Sarat Bose might appeal to the All India Congress Committee scheduled to meet next month. Sarat Bose said that he appealed 'to the basic sanction of democracy' against 'a narrow legalistic objection', and that it would not serve his purpose to take the matter to the AICC which, in his view, had a 'packed majority' of some sort. On 27 February 1940, the majority group in the Bengal PCC decided to make the breach with the official Congress irreparable; they resolved to disaffiliate the District Congress Committee of Mymensingh, Hoogly, and Jessore, for co-operating with the Election Committee appointed by the Congress Working Committee. On 29 February, the Working Committee, then meeting at Patna preparatory to the annual session of the AICC at Ramgarh, decided to suspend the Bengal PCC for acts of defiance; the PCC was also asked to show cause why it should not be disaffiliated. The unofficial leader of the Bengal Congressmen, Subhas Bose, expressed a hope that the BPCC would continue to function as before 'regardless of any *ukase* that might emanate from Wardha, Patna and Allahabad'. Soon, to the amusement of the Government of Bengal and the distress of Congress sympathizers, there were two bodies, both claiming the heritage of the august name 'Congress', but the larger one hardly looked beyond Calcutta for leadership, the other remained true to the Sage of Sevagram.¹²

3. An Atmosphere of Approaching Compromise

Speaking at a luncheon at the Orient Club at Bombay on 10 January 1940, Linlithgow delivered his New Year message to nationalist India: 'I can assure you that His Majesty's Government's concern and mine is to spare no effort to reduce to the minimum the interval between the existing state of things and the achievement of Dominion Status.' He fervently appealed to the leaders of the great political parties of India to help him in promoting the constitutional development of the Government of India. He then started a series of conversation with leaders individually to explore the possibilities of breaking the political deadlock by removing their objections to the Act of 1935. What were the points of difference between the Government of India and the right-wing Congressmen who were not averse early in 1940 to some sort of alliance or settlement between nationalist India, as represented by the Congress, and Great Britain? For a listing of these, and a fair indication of the attitudes of the viceroy and a senior right-wing Congressman, one may turn to a note written by Kanaylal M. Munshi on his interview with Linlithgow at Bombay on 12 January 1940: 'I am not going to wait till the

end of the war for settling the Indian problem,' said Linlithgow. At the end of the war, which possibly would not end till June 1941 (after a couple of battles in France, as far as the Viceroy could see), England would be exhausted by the colossal effort she was making to win the war; at that time, there would be a tendency to liberalize the institutions of the Indian Empire, and India could obtain dominion status of the Westminster variety. Meanwhile, India should develop unity and Indians should develop their capacity for the heavy work cut out for them in governing India under modern conditions, said the viceroy.

Linlithgow thought that the main objections raised by Congressmen to the Act of 1935 could be removed by negotiation. As he told Munshi:

First there is Defence. You will admit that the military machine is now no longer the concern of one country. Its training and organisation as at present must be under common control, and India must be prepared to wait to be able to take over charge. Second, foreign affairs. They are in the same position. Third, the commercial safeguards, which you call discrimination. They could be adjusted. . . . Fourth, there is the question of direct elections to the Assembly.

At this point, Munshi submitted: 'I am not sure whether Gandhiji is very particular about direct elections to the Assembly.' Linlithgow then proceeded to the fifth point, the position of the 'Native States': 'You can't have Dominion Status unless the States are brought in in some manner.' The viceroy, however, thought, if a proper effort were made, this question could be solved. 'The next question is that of the Central Assembly. I won't like to argue when people claim something as a moral right. But, given good will on both sides, ways and means could be found to have a body which would serve the purpose.' On this point, Munshi thought a convention of all the legislatures might be a good substitute.

Linlithgow: That leaves the question of minorities. I will concede that the minorities have no right to block the progress.

K.M. Munshi: But, by speaking in the way you do, you give them an instrument to put forward the highest demand. That makes our task difficult. That has been our past experience of the British statesmen. They gave the minorities such an undue importance that they were led to make extravagant claims. In 1916 Congress agreed to Jinnah's demands thinking that they would have communal peace thereafter. The Lucknow Pact was ripped open. The MacDonald Award came. Against Hindu opinion, Gandhiji got the Congress not to reject the communal award but to work it. And still when you call Gandhiji you must need call Jinnah and fifty other gentlemen as a counter-weight. And now in your speeches you throw the burden of settling with him upon us. How are we expected to do that?

Linlithgow: I have to do so. I have not merely to speak to a public in India, I have also a public in England. That public is an important factor both from your and my point of view. And it has a feeling that the Hindus as a community are against British interests.

K.M. Munshi: But you see the result. There was cordial atmosphere in your dealings with Gandhiji about the time we left office. Now you make pronouncements which look like preparations for a case to impress the world that, when we broke from you, you were right. I see a reaction to this on our side. Gandhiji's recent statements show a tendency to occupy a politically unassailable position when mass action is started. Instead of both of you coming nearer, I feel that you are drifting apart, and no settlement is likely if both of you continue to drift away from one another.

Linlithgow: You mean we are creating fences around ourselves?

K.M. Munshi: Certainly. You hold Gandhiji in great respect. You told me at Simla that you want an alliance with Right-Wing Congress. If you are serious about it why don't you help in this settlement?

Linlithgow: Am I not doing it every hour of my life?

K.M. Munshi: Why do you then let Mr Jinnah make things impossible? You have got the Aga Khan, you have got your friend Sir Sikandar. It is your actions which send up Mr Jinnah's rates. That leads him to make absurd charges against us. You do not even reply to them. And he is so difficult now that any friendly approach to him has become impossible.

Linlithgow: I know that he has become very difficult, but that is only from a short view of things. For the present he has made himself into a rallying centre of minorities. Time alone can remove him from that position. Sikandar cannot occupy that position. But from a long view of things Jinnah cannot succeed. He would be soon found out as a stumbling block to progress.

Munshi pleaded with Linlithgow for an alliance between nationalist India and Great Britain, otherwise the nationalists would go into the wilderness for a long time, 'but then Savarkar and Jinnah will fight it out'. There was a possibility of Gandhi starting a mass action: 'I feel the undercurrents amongst our ordinary Congressmen, and I wonder how long Gandhiji will be able to keep them in leash.' Linlithgow wondered whether Gandhi would be able to carry Jawaharlal, in finding a compromise formula between the Congress and the British Government. Munshi assured him that 'Jawaharlal is a great idealist and is therefore an idol of the masses. But the inspiration, organisation, and technique are all Gandhi's and Jawaharlal will not part company with Gandhiji.'¹³

At its meeting at Wardha from 19 to 21 January 1940, the Congress Working Committee decided that, with a view to ending the political deadlock in India, Mahatma Gandhi should seek from the viceroy clarifications on certain points. Gandhi had a two and a half-hour talk with

Linlithgow at New Delhi on 5 February. The next day, in a statement he issued on this talk, Gandhi said: 'The vital difference between the Congress demand and the Viceroy's offer consists in the fact that the Viceroy's offer contemplates final determination of India's destiny by the British Government whereas the Congress contemplates just the contrary. The Congress position is that the test of real freedom consists in the people of India determining their own destiny without outside interference.'¹⁴

The *Harijan* published on 10 February an article headed 'The Task Before Us', in which Gandhi assured his readers that 'There need be no disappointment among Congressmen over the failure of negotiations between H.E. the Viceroy and me. We met to explore the possibilities of a settlement. I had seen the germs of it in the Viceregal pronouncement in Bombay.' Winter being the touring season for nationalist leaders as much as for Anglo-Indian officials, Gandhi now visited Bengal; on 18 February he was paying homage to Tagore at Santiniketan. Tagore and Gandhi together represented much of the best in the Indian Awakening; in 1940, they were in the sunset glory of their lives. On 20 February, Gandhi opened a khadi and village industries exhibition at Malikanda in Dacca District, to mark the inauguration of a seven-day Gandhi Seva Sangh Conference on Gandhian constructive work which was similar to the Congress constructive programme. In his speeches at Malikanda, Gandhi advised Seva Sangh workers to give up political work, and to concentrate entirely on rural development, promoting social tolerance, and Hindu-Muslim amity. The Gandhian conception of swaraj implied achievement of these by nationalists. Sardar Patel was present at the Malikanda Conference. Party leader as he was, he had to advise Congressmen everywhere on the political situation developing in the country. It was reported that, in the course of an informal talk with Seva Sangh members at Malikanda, Sardar Patel observed that 'We have two policies to choose between, either to support the British Government unconditionally in the destruction of Nazism, or to demand independence in return for such support.'¹⁵

Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, had said clearly, in a statement issued after Linlithgow's Orient Club speech, that India wants independence, but in January and February 1940, and even after that, there was a widespread impression in the country that behind the scenes negotiations were going on for an understanding between the Government and the Congress. Many Congressmen were inclined to regard the Orient Club speech as a definite offer for consideration, and this mood could be seen reflected in Rajagopalachari's speech at the Madras Christian College on 25 January: 'We should not allow posterity to say that a great opportunity was spoiled by internal differences.' He had, however, added: 'Dominion Status today might be equivalent to

complete freedom. It might even be better because we get a navy without paying for it, but it is not the same thing as complete freedom.' On 3 February, in his address to the Tamilnad Political Conference, Bhulabhai Desai, a member of the Working Committee, referred to Linlithgow's offer of Dominion Status and suggested: 'Let us take them [the British] at their word, and ask them to prove it in deeds.'¹⁶

In these months, Jawaharlal served the cause of independence with great determination, both in public speeches and behind the scenes in Congress high politics. He thought it strange that people should think that, after the war, dominion status and British imperialism would remain as they were in the 1930s, and that there should be talk of the Congress standing for anything but the fullest independence of India. 'I admit', said Jawaharlal in a speech at Nagpur on 22 January 1940, 'that the Viceroy's recent Bombay speech is an advance on the previous stand taken up by him, but I still think that the present British cabinet is not capable of meeting our demand for Swaraj. We have to keep up our fight for freedom and for that purpose we may even have to resort to satyagraha.' Two days later, at Allahabad, in a statement to the press, Jawaharlal declared that there could be no settlement in India except on the basis of Indian independence and India's right to frame the future Indian constitution; when in Europe empires were fighting for mastery, it was the duty of patriots in India not to think in terms of temporary settlements: 'be wary and deep our ideals, our objectives and our honour intact'. Again, in a speech at a press conference in Bombay on 10 February, Jawaharlal summed up the position in India in two words, 'nothing doing', and said in explanation: 'This is not a matter of friendly individuals talking together, but of fundamental conflicts between vast forces and ideas, namely, nationalism aiming at independence, and imperialism trying to consolidate itself and continue its hold.' Events and the strength of the respective parties would be the ultimate arbiters in this world-wide conflict between imperialism and nationalism. India could not give up its demand for independence because the British Government found itself in a difficulty.¹⁷

In private, as in public, Jawaharlal expostulated with Congressmen on talk about compromise with the government. 'The object of the government is to gain our goodwill for their war,' he wrote to Mahatma Gandhi on 24 January 1940, and suggested that it was fairer, considering the Congress position (Indian independence was the minimum demand), to lay stress on the absence of common ground between nationalist India and imperialist Britain, so that the government and others would know how matters stood and adjust themselves accordingly. 'What will happen again is that the Viceroy will complain that he was misled.' The *Pioneer* had come out with a heading 'Congress Ministries' Resignation

Bluff Called by Viceroy', and other newspapers were spreading the idea of a compromise settlement being imminent, which could bring the Congress ministries back to office in seven or eight provinces. The popular expectation of some big and sudden development was raised by some optimistic phrases used by Gandhi, some recent speeches of Congressmen talking of dominion status too compromisingly, and one or two minor occurrences like the UP governor's recent visit to Anand Bhawan.¹⁸

On 4 February, a day before Gandhi was to meet the viceroy at New Delhi, Jawaharlal wrote again to Gandhi to say that he found that the question was 'of maintaining our position with dignity and not weakening it in any way'. There was no immediate question of satyagraha or conflict, but he found the pervading 'atmosphere of approaching compromise' enervating and depressing. 'I fear that the impression is widely prevalent in England as well as in India that we are in no event going to have any conflict and therefore we are going to accept such terms as we can get.' In the past weeks, even the Congress delegates' elections had been influenced by this impression, and many undesirables, people greedy for power and plums of office, were again pushing themselves to the front. Jawaharlal deplored the fact that on the question of complete independence of India, Congressmen failed to speak in one voice and with a feeling of urgency.¹⁹

On his objections to dominion status, Jawaharlal had written a long confidential Note on Congress Policy dated Wardha, 20 January 1940, obviously to aid the deliberations of the Working Committee meeting there from 19 to 21 January. It is reproduced below:

In considering the present position and what should be put forward as India's demand, it is important that we keep in mind the complexities of the international situation and the war and the possible outcome of this war. All this is uncertain and it is difficult to base any calculation on it, and yet it cannot possibly be ignored, or else we might get entangled with all manner of commitments which we find difficult or undesirable to accept.

So far as the British Government is concerned, it may express its own wish that a free India may continue as a partner in a British federation of free nations, but it will be for the Indian people to determine this and it will be open to them to sever this connection if they so wish. For the present, this connection inevitably continues till that decision is finally made.

Thus though we do not expressly deny the possibility of Dominion Status after the Westminster model, we cannot commit ourselves to it because:

- (i) We do not know what the position will be at the end of the war and how this conception might develop.
- (ii) We think that the ideal should be a larger world group and not one confined to the British group, which necessarily would mean other

- and possibly hostile groups. To this larger group we would gladly owe allegiance, as we hope England will.
- (iii) We do not know what political or economic policy England or her Dominions will follow then. If this is not in conformity with our policy we cannot find a place in her group.
 - (iv) We cannot be parties to a group which denies us racial equality and treats our countrymen in the manner they are treated today in parts of the empire.
 - (v) The conception of Dominion Status developed as between England and her own people spread out in various colonies. There was and is much in common between them. These common bonds are lacking here and it is difficult to see how Dominion Status fits in with India.
 - (vi) Psychologically, Dominion Status is bitterly opposed in India and it cannot be accepted quite apart from its context because in many minds it is still a symbol of alien domination to some extent. A free India, deciding for itself, may choose its own way and may ally itself closely with England. But before it does so it must clearly have this freedom to decide. Not to have it itself means that something is being imposed upon her. Not to be called independent is itself significant as it means that something less is meant.

If the British Government make a proper and acceptable declaration then steps have to be taken to give effect to it. There is no reason why this process should be delayed till the end of the war. We should not agree to this postponement though circumstances may perhaps lead to that. In any event the process will take a year or so. A constituent assembly being agreed to, its details should be worked out. I think adult suffrage is essential both from the political and communal points of view. But, to avoid difficulties, indirect election should be accepted, the primary electors electing electoral colleges. Separate electorates for those recognised minorities as desired it.²⁰

This note by Jawaharlal indicates that the Working Committee had, early in 1940 and after, fully considered the reasons for keeping the Congress anchored to the pledge of complete independence, and to the demand for self-determination in constitution-making for the people of India. On 16 February, the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee adopted a resolution, drafted by Jawaharlal and moved by Lal Bahadur Shastri, recording the conviction of the Committee that no attempted solution short of full independence, control of foreign policy and a constituent assembly would be acceptable to the people of India.²¹ On 22 February, Jawaharlal wrote to Maulana Azad, the president-elect of the Congress, a long letter on Congress policy and urged him to make clear, once for all, the Congress position, viz. that there could be no compromise with India within the structure of imperialism.²² On the same day, Jawaharlal wrote to Rajendra Prasad to say, 'I am clearly of opinion that there should be no invitation from us, formal or informal, to members of the British Parliament to visit India.' Such a move on

behalf of the Congress would mean a kind of appeal to the British Parliament, indicating an excessive desire on the part of the Congress to come to terms with the British Government. 'Apart from this, there is no doubt that a Parliamentary delegation will consist of second-rate or third-rate people. They will come here and try to boss over everybody and to balance the scales evenly, as they will put it, between the Congress and the Muslim League and other groups. All this will bring out all the wrong and disruptive tendencies in India.'²³

In early 1940, there was marked political contention, and efforts by the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha to gain advantageous positions by negotiation with the British Government and to gain, at the cost of the Congress, influence over the masses, legislators, and prospective voters in India. No marked accentuation of religiosity among communal party leaders, nor any novel social-cultural movement among Indians in the last years of British rule explain either the origin or the nature of the communal problem and the sporadic Hindu-Muslim riots which caused great misery to lakhs of people from Sind to Noakhali in the 1940s. The Hindu-Muslim communal problem was essentially a political problem, and the Congress-League-Mahasabha contention was really one of conflict between a politically advanced secular party and two opposing parties appealing to rather medieval communal passions to gain political ends. As a nationalist party, the Congress struggled against British imperialism; as a secular party inspired by the West European liberal ideas of democracy, toleration, and constitutionalism, the Congress was obliged to defend the new political culture it represented against attacks mainly by two all-India parties rapidly gaining in popularity: the League claiming to be the sole spokesman of the Muslims and the Mahasabha claiming to be the sole spokesman of the Hindus.

Gandhi addressed Jinnah as 'Quaid-e-Azam', probably for the first time, in a letter of 16 January 1940, and said: 'I do not mind your opposition to the Congress. But your plan to amalgamate all the parties opposed to the Congress at once gives your movement a national character. If you succeed you will free the country from communal incubus, and in my humble opinion give a lead to the Muslims and others for which you will deserve the gratitude not only of the Muslims but of all other communities.' In reply, Jinnah wrote to Gandhi on 21 January: 'More than anyone else, you happen to be the man today who commands the confidence of Hindu India and are in a position to deliver the goods on their behalf.' Jinnah added some friendly advice similar to that thousands of Gandhi's critics in India and abroad would have been happy to proffer:

Events are moving fast, a campaign of polemics, of your discourse in the *Harijan* on metaphysics, philosophy and ethics, or your peculiar doctrines

regarding 'khaddar, ahimsa' and spinning are not going to win India's freedom. Action and statesmanship alone will help us in our forward march. I believe that you might still rise to your stature in the service of our country and make your proper contribution towards leading India to contentment and happiness.²⁴

In the middle of February 1940, in an article written for *Time and Tide*, Jinnah explained his proposition that democracy of the western variety was not suitable for Indians, and that an Indian constitution should be evolved recognizing the existence of two nations in India, one 'Muslim' and the other 'Hindu'. At the end of the month, Jinnah told the All India Muslim League Council that he had impressed upon the viceroy, in course of their talk on 6 February at New Delhi, that the League demanded an examination *de novo*, in the light of experience in 1937-9, of the British scheme of constitutional reform in India.

Leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha announced in January-February 1940, that dominion status of the Westminster variety being virtual independence, India should be able to co-operate honourably with the British Government. At the same time, the Mahasabha leaders assailed the Congress policies. They feared that, under pressure of events, or by calculation, to break the constitutional deadlock and to hasten to the seats of power, the Congress could make a deal with the Muslim League at the cost of the 'one country, one nation' principle. On 1 February 1940, addressing a public meeting at Jamshedpur, B.S. Moonje declared: 'It is the duty of every Hindu today to join the Mahasabha and forget the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, who, as Dictator of Congress, has imposed upon them under the name of nationalism for the last 20 years.' In his presidential address at the Lucknow Hindu Youth Conference on 3 March, Moonje announced: 'The Congress has now outlived its mission and must make room for the Mahasabha.'²⁵

The Congress leaders watched the trend of opinion among smaller parties and groups also. These, too, appeared inclined to welcome the British offer of dominion status and the idea of a compromise with the British Government. In February, the Aga Khan gave enthusiastic support to Sardar Patel's suggestion that the outstanding political problems of the day could well be settled by a conference of members of legislatures in India.²⁶ The Council of the National Liberal Federation of India, at a meeting in Bombay on 18 February, welcomed Linlithgow's announcement of the British Government's desire to grant dominion status to India at the conclusion of the war. The attitude of the other smaller groups towards the rivalry of the big parties in this period was similar to that of the Indian Christian Association; at its annual meeting at Calcutta on 14 February, H.C. Mookherjee, the Association's President observed: 'We are not a clamorous party, we do not raise a hue and

cry; but we are thoroughly alert and alive to the situation, and we are studying the currents and cross-currents that are going on in the country.'²⁷ The Indian Christians, the Sikhs, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Shia Conference, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the All India Momin Conference, trade unions and peasant unions had adopted, as a general rule, a friendly attitude towards the Indian National Congress. These minority organizations gave little support to the League's political platform.

The Unionist Party in the Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal were in political alliance with the League, but, their leaders, Sikandar Hayat Khan in the Punjab and Fazlul Haq in Bengal, although formally associated with the League, stoutly retained the privilege of thinking for themselves in national and provincial politics. Sikandar was viewed by Congressmen as the prize boy and mouthpiece of British imperialism, and as a competent and able chief minister.²⁸ Fazlul Haq was proud of Bengali culture and not a communalist at heart; he enjoyed extending patronage to Assembly members and others whenever opportunities occurred. The Bengal Government was said to be amazingly corrupt, and there were frequent uproars in the Bengal Assembly over allegations of irregularities.²⁹ Neither Sikandar nor Fazlul appeared to Congress leaders as unapproachable and as vain as Jinnah, in those years.

Because of the leadership and influence of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Khan Sahib, the former premier of the province, the North-West Frontier Province was predominantly pro-Congress, though the people were devout Muslims. In Sind, Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh's group was firmly pro-Congress, but the Muslim League was gaining influence in the province. In Assam, too, the League was becoming popular among the Muslims as elsewhere from about 1936, after the League reduced its membership fee to two annas a year, and changed its political objective to independence of India with special safeguards for Muslims. The Congress Muslim membership was difficult to determine; according to one estimate, it was about 50 to 75 thousand in 1939 in the United Provinces. On the whole, Muslim peasants were favourable to the Congress in the UP and Bihar, in those years, but it was possible to shake their allegiance to the Congress by an appeal to religion.³⁰ There were nationalist Muslims in every province. To enable them to express their opinions effectively and in an organized way, Maulana Azad, Asaf Ali and other Muslim Congress leaders made preparations from February 1940 for the first All-India Azad (independent) Muslim Conference convened in April 1940, at Delhi.³¹

4. The Ramgarh Resolution, March 1940

There was no real contest for the Congress presidentship in February 1940. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a senior member of the Working

Committee and one of the three-member Congress Parliamentary Board, was supported by the rightists and the Congress Socialists. He secured 1,864 votes as against 183 secured by his rival, the leader of Radical Congressmen, M.N. Roy — a brilliant but changeable freedom fighter associated in the past successively with the Bengal terrorists, Russian and Chinese Communists, and internationalist anti-fascist radical socialists.

Maulana Azad had withdrawn from the Congress presidential election in 1939. In 1940, when Mahatma Gandhi again requested him to become Congress president, Azad readily agreed. 'I felt', Azad later wrote in his autobiography, 'that the present occasion was different and I would be failing in my duty if I again refused.' The Second World War had started in Europe; in India, there was an air of expectancy and fear; within the Working Committee, on the question of India's participation in the war, the members were not unanimous. Azad felt that India should align herself with the democratic powers, if Britain would make an unequivocal promise of independence to India. 'How could India fight for other's freedom when she was in bondage herself? If the British Government made an immediate declaration of India's independence, it would become the duty of all Indians to sacrifice everything for the freedom of the nation.'³² In this respect, he represented numerous Congressmen and Congress sympathizers in this period.

Azad was not a strict Gandhian, at any time. With him non-violence was a policy and not a political creed. But no Congressman believed more strongly than Maulana Azad in the excellence of non-violence as a policy in the Indian struggle for freedom from the British rule. For many years, he was a slender bridge of communication between nationalist India and the politically awakened West Asia. He was a maulana of maulanas in Islamic scholarship, yet he was a liberal rationalist in thought on politics, society and culture. In his early youth, as a versifier in Urdu, he adopted the pen-name of 'Azad', 'the Free', which he vindicated in life with grace and fortitude. His mother was a daughter of Arabia; his father, who settled in Calcutta in his late years, was a Muslim divine of Mecca reputed from Cairo to Constantinople for scholarship and public spirit. The family claimed descent from immigrants to India from Herat in the days of Babur the Mughal. Abul Kalam developed contact with nationalists in Egypt and Iran and with Young Turk leaders whom he met in course of his study in Egypt and travel in West Asia, before the First World War. Because of his family background and his travel in West Asia in early manhood, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had a subtler sense of history, a broader vision of India's future, and an intenser spirit of opposition to British imperialism than the President of the Muslim League.

Indian independence and the full promotion of participation by Indian Muslims in the national struggle were the twin passions of this great Congressman, ever since as a teenager he first entered the freedom struggle by joining a band of Bengal terrorists in the heady days at Calcutta following the Partition of Bengal in 1905. In the next decade, he became famous as a pioneer in India of first-class Urdu journalism; in the Non-cooperation Movement of 1920, he was one of the first supporters and associates of Gandhi; in 1923, he was the President of the Indian National Congress at its special session held at Delhi. Since then associated with every important decision of the Congress executive, Maulana Azad was respected for his ability to mediate between the Pro-changers and the No-changers in the early twenties and the rightists and the leftists in the thirties. He belonged to no group; his sympathies were, however, with the leftists in the matter of social and economic reform. He was self-taught in the English language, but his comprehension of the language was adequate to enable him to read scholarly works of philosophy, logic, and history in English, with occasional help from a dictionary. He did not usually speak in English; but he was a magnificent speaker in Urdu, though he seldom addressed public meetings. He was a fine representative of an old-world, well-bred Indian Muslim gentleman of striking personality — urbane and witty, of quick perception and high sensitivity. Azad's faults as a politician, it was said by other Congressmen, were his lack of ambition, dislike for the rough and tumble in politics, distaste for crowds and publicity, disdain for attempts to gather a personal following, and ill health.³³ The Congress organization and national cause suffered little on account of these endearing scholarly faults of Maulana Azad and gained much advantage from his gifts — tact, inner strength, breadth of mind and capacity for sacrifice and suffering — during his tenure of presidentship from 1940 to 1946. It was a hard testing time for the Congress Working Committee and its president, the kingpin.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad assumed the presidentship of the Congress on 17 March 1940. In the afternoon of that day about five thousand visitors were present in the Subjects Committee pandal in Mazaharpuri (Ramgarh Congress Nagar in the Chhota Nagpur area in Bihar) to enjoy the spectacle of the famed nationalist leaders sitting on the large dais, and of Azad and Rajendra Prasad arriving in ceremonial procession, led by the General Officer Commanding of the Congress Volunteers and accompanied by a band. After Rajendra Prasad handed over charge, Azad declared that the All India Congress Committee would proceed to deliberate as the Subjects Committee of the AICC. After the Committee adopted, all standing, the condolence resolution on the death of notable Congressmen in different parts of the country, the main resolution (the only official resolution on this occasion) of the Ramgarh Congress was

moved by Rajendra Prasad and seconded by Jawaharlal. Already framed and adopted by the Working Committee at its meeting at Patna (28 February-1 March) preparatory to the Congress annual session, the resolution was essentially the work of Gandhi.³⁴ The document aimed at clarifying the Congress position in regard to four points: dominion status, the future constitution of India, minority rights, and co-operation with the British Government:

Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism, and dominion or any other status within the imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India, is not in keeping with the dignity of a great nation and would bind India in many years to British policies and economic structure.

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The recent pronouncements made on behalf of the British Government in regard to India demonstrate that Great Britain is carrying on the War fundamentally for imperialist ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India as well as of other Asiatic and African countries. Under these circumstances, it is clear that the Congress cannot in any way, directly or indirectly, be party to the War, which means continuance of this exploitation.

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India's constitution must be based on independence, democracy and national unity, and the Congress repudiates attempts to divide or to split up her nationhood. [In a constituent assembly] the rights of all recognized minorities will be protected by agreement, as far as possible, between the elected representatives of the various majority and minority groups, or by arbitration, if agreement is not reached on any point.

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This preliminary step [the resignation of Congress ministries in 1939] must necessarily be followed by Civil Disobedience, to which the Congress will unhesitatingly resort as soon as the Congress Organisation is considered fit enough for the purpose, or in case circumstances so shaped themselves as to precipitate a crisis.

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The Congress desires to draw the attention of Congressmen to Gandhiji's declaration that he can only undertake the responsibility of declaring Civil Disobedience when he is satisfied that they are strictly observing discipline and are carrying out the constructive programme prescribed in the Independence Pledge.

On the second day, 18 March, at Ramgarh, the main official resolution on the political crisis in India was debated vigorously in the Subjects Committee meeting, and various amendments were moved, by the leftists in the main. At the end of the day, the Subjects Committee adopted the official resolution, with only ten votes in opposition. The debate was significant because it revealed the respective positions of the

leftists and the rightists in the Congress in early 1940 in regard to the call of the Working Committee for satyagraha preparations. Having announced in February that the Congress presidential election was really a contest between two sets of ideas and ideals, M.N. Roy was expected to lead the leftist attack in the Subjects Committee against the rightist position. He urged that the proper strategy of struggle was not a civil disobedience movement in the near future, but preparations for organizing local struggles for the redress of burning social and economic grievances of the exploited masses. If organized under the guidance of the primary Congress Committees turned into 'People's Councils', these preliminary struggles would produce in India a popular demand for political independence, a will to power, the key to success. 'When that will is developed, we shall see how to enforce it', said M.N. Roy. In supporting him, Rajani Mukherji wondered why there should a civil disobedience movement, unless it was designed for practical benefits for the people like the removal of their poverty and unemployment. C.L. Bharadwaj declared that the Communists were not going to vote for the official resolution, because it did not contemplate an immediate mass civil disobedience movement against the unholy alliance of the British and Indian rulers of India, who were preparing, with support from the communal and reactionary anti-people forces, to control the national movement in India and to smash the Indian National Congress if it called for a civil disobedience movement later. Explaining the decision of the Central Executive of the Congress Socialist Party to support the Ramgarh Resolution, Yusuf Meherally said in the Subjects Committee: 'As we feel it would not find universal support in the Congress at this stage, and as we feel that on the eve of struggle it is not desirable to divide the house on ideological issues and we feel that it is absolutely essential to preserve the unity of the Congress at this stage, we are unable to support the amendment of Mr Roy.' Meherally wondered why the Communists were opposed to the official resolution when, by their own admission, it signified a great advance on the existing stalemate in Indian politics. But, in common with the Communists, the Socialists held that, to the government's recent orders for arrests and detention of political workers (Communists, Socialists and other leftists) the proper reply by the Congress would be an early launching of nationwide civil disobedience and an intensification of war resistance activity by every Congressman.

Making a dig at the Communists, Royists, and Forward Bloc sympathizers, many of whom were then meeting at Kishan Nagar (not far from the Ramgarh Congress Nagar), where Subhas Bose was presiding at an Anti-Compromise Conference of his supporters, Sardar Patel said in the Subjects Committee: 'I see people are ready for disobedience but not for civil disobedience. Since 1934, when Civil Disobedience was

suspended, I have not seen any other programme put into action. What you have heard today are only platform programmes. They only come up when AICC meets.' After the official resolution was carried, Mahatma Gandhi addressed the house, amidst pin-drop silence, for fifty minutes. Speaking in his broken Hindustani which endeared him to the mass of his listeners, Gandhi explained his conditional approval of the Ramgarh call for satyagraha by Congressmen, 'I have accepted the need for a fight, but I shall exercise restraint. If I am the general, then, just as a general wants to prepare for a fight before he gives orders to his soldiers, I shall do the same. I do not find anything to suggest that we are ready for a fight immediately.' He needed disciplined men who were non-violent, free from hatred of Englishmen and other men, and carrying on the constructive programme seriously.³⁵

Over a lakh of people visited the Ramgarh Congress Nagar during the 53rd Session of the Congress. On 19 March, just as the first plenary or open Session was to start at 5.30 p.m., an unseasonal thunder-shower spoiled arrangements and filled the vast amphitheatre, set up on undulating ground, with swirling knee-deep muddy water, but thousands of visitors and delegates, all thoroughly drenched, kept standing at their places. In a continuing downpour, Maulana Azad declared that the session would commence and conclude however briefly to mark the formalities only, even if it would 'rain blood' that afternoon in gathering darkness.³⁶ The welcome address by Rajendra Prasad and presidential address by Azad, which had been printed and circulated, were taken as read, and Pandit Nehru, who moved the main resolution, and Acharya Kripalani, who seconded it, reserved their say for the next meeting. In his welcome address, Rajendra Prasad made a learned survey of the history of the Bihar region; he reminded Congressmen of the words of the Buddha: 'O Ananda, so long as the assemblies of the Vajjies continue to meet frequently and are well attended you can expect only their progress and not their destruction.'³⁷ We give below some very brief extracts from the English version of Maulana Azad's presidential address. It is the most eloquent statement of the political perspective of a nationalist Muslim in the entire history of the Indian National Congress.³⁸

I am a Muslim and am proud of the fact. Islam's splendid traditions of 1300 years are my inheritance.

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I am proud of being an Indian. I am part of the indivisible unity that is Indian nationality. I am indispensable to this noble edifice and without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim.

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It was India's historic destiny that many human races and cultures should

flow to her, finding a home in her hospitable soil, and that many a caravan should find rest here.

* * *

I am one of those who believe that revival may be a necessity in a religion but in social matters it is a denial of progress. . . . Nature does her fashioning through her hidden processes in the course of centuries. . . . Whether we like it or not, we have now become an Indian nation, united and indivisible. No fantasy or artificial scheming to separate and divide can break this unity.

* * *

90 millions Muslims of India have no other right course of action than one to which I invited them in 1912. . . . We are dealing with the destinies of peoples and nations. We cannot come to right conclusions if we are swept away by the passions of the moment.

* * *

I repeat this today, that in the texture of Indian politics, nothing is further removed from the truth than to say that Indian Muslims occupy the position of a political minority. It is equally absurd for them to be apprehensive about their rights and interests in a democratic India.

* * *

Politically speaking, the word minority does not mean just a group that is numerically smaller and therefore entitled to special protection. It means a group that is so small in number and so lacking in other qualities that give strength, that it has no confidence in its own capacity to protect itself from the much larger group that surrounds it.

* * *

We see the face of British imperialism as clearly now as we did in the last war, and we are not prepared to assist in its triumph by participating in the war. Our cause is crystal clear. We do not wish to see British imperialism triumphant and stronger and thus lengthen the period of our own subjection to it.

* * *

Our success depends upon three factors: unity, discipline and full confidence in Mahatma Gandhi's leadership.

* * *

It rained throughout the night of 19 March, and in spite of fitful showers, on the morning of 20 March, exactly at the appointed hour, the adjourned plenary session commenced at the Jhanda Chouk (National Flag Square), flat ground in front of the village industries exhibition. Jawaharlal, Kripalani, and Sardar Patel made speeches explaining the Ramgarh resolution; six amendments were moved but all were rejected by overwhelming majorities. The main resolution was then put to vote and passed, only 16 delegates voting against it. For all present, delegates and visitors, the event of the day was Mahatma Gandhi's speech in which he impressed upon all that, with him, the non-violent method was the only acceptable method in the struggle for independence and that the satyagraha he had agreed to lead on behalf of the Congress

should be based on goodwill, not on hatred born of fear and anger. 'Anger is opposed to Satyagraha. We have no quarrel with the British people. We want to be their friends and retain their good will, not on the basis of their domination, but on the basis of a free and equal India.' It was wrong to think that satyagraha needed no preparation, no discipline, and no respect for *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and the *charkha* (the spinning wheel, the Congress symbol of its constructive programme). These very things had given him influence with the Indian masses; this fact should be remembered by all who proposed to follow him. 'Those who clamour for immediate launching of Civil Disobedience want to have me with them, why, because they are conscious that the masses are with me.' 'I claim to have some influence with the millions.' Congressmen should prepare for satyagraha as required by the Ramgarh resolution, but he would not be hurried into a movement. The final decisions as to the timing and scope of the campaign would rest with him alone, and he would obey an inner voice deep within his being.³⁹

At Ramgarh opened a new chapter in Congress history, in which Gandhiji would slowly raise another swell of popular emotion for swaraj.

5. Organizational Preparations (March-September 1940)

In the months between the Ramgarh Congress of March 1940 and Acharya Vinoba Bhave's individual satyagraha in October 1940 in defiance of the Defence of India Rules, two sets of events were of special interest to Congressmen, the Government of India, and other political parties contending for political advantage. First, the elaborate satyagraha preparations described in the present section; second, the response of the Working Committee and Gandhiji to moves made by other parties and the Government of India described in the following section of this chapter. 'The purpose of Civil Disobedience is to evoke the spirit of sacrifice in the whole nation', said the Ramgarh resolution, which had assumed that, eventually, a civil disobedience movement was inevitable. In his two speeches at Ramgarh, made in consultations with the Working Committee members, Gandhi had made it clear that he demanded fairly long organizational and individual preparation for civil disobedience. On returning to Swaraj Bhavan at Allahabad from Ramgarh, the Congress General Secretary, Acharya Kripalani, and the AICC Office Secretary, Sadiq Ali, with their small band of devoted workers, prepared and issued a spate of circulars, instructions, and letters of enquiry, to Congress committees in the provinces.

In his Circular No. 1, dated 23 March 1940, Kripalani informed the Provincial Congress committees that the Ramgarh Resolution should be

read along with Gandhiji's speeches reported in the press and that renewed efforts were required to promote the Congress constructive programme. 'We may not forget that the struggle is inherent in the situation. Nay it has already started.' Civil disobedience would be the Congress reply to the British Government's offensive in the form of orders of arrest, detention and internment of nationalists, started on the eve of the Ramgarh Congress. Circular No. 3, dated 25 March, asked the provincial committees to remember Gandhiji's recent instructions regarding the forthcoming celebrations of National Week (6-13 April): 'A living, continuous mass contact is impossible without some constructive programme requiring almost daily contact of the workers with the masses.'⁴⁰ Circular No. 4 dated 29 March 1940 forwarded to the provincial committees a copy of an article by Gandhi in the columns of the *Harijan* (25 March 1940) and a draft form of the Satyagraha Pledge of 1940 based upon the pledge drawn up and adopted at the open session of the Congress at Ahmedabad in 1921. The Satyagraha Pledge required a person to be an active worker in the constructive programme set out in the Independence Pledge of 1940, and to be obedient to superior officers and rules prescribed by the Congress organization. In addition, one had to declare as follows: 'I am prepared to suffer imprisonment or even death for the sake of the cause and my country without resentment'; and, 'In the event of my imprisonment I shall not claim from the Congress any support for myself, my family and dependents.' Nobody who was not above the age of 18 could take this pledge to become an active satyagrahi. Passive satyagrahis were those men and women who, though they would not spin on the charkha or court or suffer imprisonment, believed in truth and non-violence, the two cardinal principles of satyagraha, and wished well to this struggle. They would actively help in the prosecution of the constructive programme so far as it was not against their principles; they would help the satyagraha movement best if they would not 'interfere with the course of the struggle by themselves courting imprisonment and aiding or precipitating strikes of labourers or students.'⁴¹

Henceforth, for practical purposes, every Congressman was expected to be a satyagrahi, passive or active; and every Congress committee was to convert itself into a Satyagraha Committee. Gandhi had warned Congressmen that he would unhesitatingly call a halt to the hazardous and delicate experiment that he was about to perform at the first sign of people getting violent. Acharya Kripalani urged:

Those whose faith in non-violence is not as bright as Gandhiji would wish it, will, I hope, have the patience to allow Satyagraha a chance, specially when with almost one voice the nation has reposed its faith and confidence in Gandhiji's leadership. After all those who work for peace and justice in this country or for the world, may not be impatient. Let Gandhi and the

Congress try the Satyagraha method of saving humanity from violence. When Satyagraha fails, after it has been given a fair trial in terms of the conditions laid down by its author and initiator, it will be time to use the orthodox way of violence, if the nation so wishes. In the meantime, to interfere with the Gandhian manner of making a revolution would not be to advance the cause of freedom from imperialism and of peace in a war-weary world.

This special advice was aimed at Communists, Forward Blocists, and Royists, the known non-Gandhians yet within the Congress organization, and numerous other Congressmen who did not rule out the option of violent methods if non-violence failed as a policy.⁴²

Non-Gandhians found their position in the Congress increasingly uncomfortable after the Working Committee, at its meeting at Wardha from 15 to 19 April 1940, recommended that those members of the Congress executive bodies, or office-bearers, who were unable to take the prescribed Satyagraha Pledge, and shoulder the burden of a struggle under the disciplined guidance of the Congress, should voluntarily withdraw from their executive positions. Since office-bearers in the Congress enjoyed considerable social prestige and influence in public life, this recommendation led many people to sign the pledge because it was expedient rather than because they really wished to do so. Though there were occasional protests even from Gandhians, the rule of transforming every committee of the Congress into a Satyagraha committee was maintained by the Working Committee.⁴³ By the end of May, probably all the provincial committees and most of the district committees of the Congress organization were turned into Satyagraha committees. Provincial committees acted as supreme satyagraha committees in their respective areas. According to an instruction from the Congress General Secretary issued early in April, the district committees were advised to send bands of speakers, selected from active satyagrahis, to tour the villages and inform the people on the Congress viewpoint and programme. It was hoped that local committees would, in the course of the next few weeks, be able to organize at least one meeting in each village in a district (on an average there were about 2,500 villages to every district). Publicity was to be organized by a separate department of the provincial Congress committee; at least three other departments — charkha, Minority, and Harijan — were to be set up, and, if necessary, more. Funds were to be raised to finance their work.⁴⁴

The will for satyagraha could be developed among the people by training in the prescribed constructive work collectively. In his Circular No.4, issued on 29 March 1940, Acharya Kripalani explained the vital importance of training in satyagraha:

Let every man and woman feel that he or she is already in jail. Let them combine under a Congress organisation or Satyagraha association, or Sabha and establish ashrams, shibirs and camps where the members carry out in daily routine the programme that is prescribed. Let us even from now suspend our private normal activities and devote ourselves to the work of preparation. In such shibirs, ashrams and camps additional items of work may be undertaken, such as volunteering and first aid to the injured. Let such camps continue till the inmates find themselves in jail. Let the camps be conducted with as much voluntary 'sanyam' (restraint) and simplicity of life as are compulsorily the lot of the Satyagrahi after he is convicted and finds himself in jail. If this is done the order to march may be given even inside one month as Gandhiji hopes.⁴⁵

In the event, many months of preparation were found necessary before Gandhi could start a civil disobedience movement. Fortnightly reports from the provincial Congress committees did not come to the AICC office regularly, and the reports, except from Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Mahakoshal, Vidarbha, and Punjab scarcely supplied the kind of detailed and precise information the AICC office needed for aiding the deliberations of the Working Committee and Gandhi. By early May, reports arriving from the provinces to the Congress General Secretary revealed that there was considerable enthusiasm for satyagraha among Congressmen but the Congress organizational machinery was not in a satisfactory condition. Time was needed to turn the Congress committees at the district circle and village level into proper satyagraha committees. The provincial committees could not readily obtain elementary organizational information from subordinate committees, mainly because these had no proper or regular office assistants, registers and records. The paid office staff in the largest establishment in a provincial Congress committee in June 1940 (Uttar Pradesh) numbered 97; and the smallest (North-West Frontier Province) had only one clerk, whose monthly salary bill amounted to Rupees ten.⁴⁶ In May and June, Inspectors appointed by the AICC office visited the provinces to collect information and for personal discussion with local leaders and workers.⁴⁷ The reports of these inspectors revealed that few PCC offices kept their accounts according to AICC instructions; no surplus funds for meeting incidental expenses could be found with the PCCs, except in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.⁴⁸ In different parts of India small Congress offices were probably in no better condition than that of the Delhi PCC in June 1940:

The office of the Delhi PCC is in a most chaotic state. The office is just being reorganised and there is practically no Congress activity. The Committee is also hopelessly in want of funds. For its day to day expenses even it has sometimes to arrange for temporary accommodation from some members or office bearers.

Till 1937, the Delhi PCC was in a good working condition; in 1938, the local Congress machinery went under the control of a follower of Subhas Chandra Bose; in 1939, the PCC split, and the two groups made themselves ridiculous in public by mutual recriminations. In urban areas, their immediate field, there was little activity; they completely ignored the masses in rural areas. 'Congress committee could not get the public support financially as well as morally which was and should be their main support always', wrote R.K.L. Nandkeolyiar in his thorough report of his inspection of the Delhi PCC office from 19 to 24 June 1940, covering office staff, accounts, satyagraha training, the rural workers' training camp at Narela (held from 7 to 21 June 1940), the Charkha Club, meetings of the PCC and its Working Committee, local boards, election tribunal, party strife and public reaction.⁴⁹

As the satyagraha preparations accelerated, group rivalry within the Congress weakened noticeably, except in Bengal, by the middle of June 1940. In Bengal, both the right wing Congress and the Communists faced a serious challenge from the Forward Bloc. In Tamil Nadu, group rivalry was no problem for the right wing; Socialists were small in number. Socialists, Royists and Communists constituted the left bloc dominating the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee in this period. The PCC in the Punjab reported that group rivalry among Congressmen was on the decrease. Utkal regretted that, because of Local Board and office-acceptance issues raised by some Congressmen, rivalry and corruption had appeared; a small number of Socialists had not signed the Satyagraha Pledge: and in Ganjam there was an opposition bloc of Congressmen. In Vidarbha, in the Provincial Congress Committee of 45 about five were in opposition; the dissentients were mainly the followers of M.S. Aney, the Congress Nationalist leader, with a strong base in the taluka of Mehkar. The right-wing Congress commanded the allegiance of the provincial and other Congress committees in the North-West Frontier Province. Gujarat reported that the Socialists had accepted the Congress programme, but other left groups in the province (Communists, Royists, and Forward Blocists) were holding out against the official directives. These leftists neither signed the Satyagraha Pledge nor resigned their seats in committees. In Nagpur some Congressmen had communal bias; there was no strong leader; there was also a group of obstructionists; and in this province groups existed less for ideological differences and more for personal considerations. In Mahakoshal, too, group rivalries among Congressmen were of a personal character; Local Board and PCC elections had encouraged groupism; the Jubbulpore City Congress Committee was in the hands of the opposition; the provincial committee included some Forward Bloc and Radical Congressmen. 'The Congress Reputation is at a low ebb', was how a contemporary assessment summed up the situation there.

Of the leftists in Karnataka, the Socialists co-operated with the official Congress leaders. In Uttar Pradesh, personal rivalries were in strong evidence in the district Congress committees, but to the current Congress programme oppositionists created no obstruction. The Congress reputation had declined in Ajmere-Merwara, because of group rivalry and Forward Bloc activities; however, the official Congress group was gaining ground and the group organized by Baba Narsingh Das in support of Subhas Bose was totally ineffective. In Andhra, group rivalry was not acute; the Kisan Sabha under Ranga posed no big problem, being weak in numbers. Bihar reported that Forward Bloc supporters were negligible in number and the strong Socialist group in the province were consistent in their support to the official Congress and to the programme of satyagraha; the Kisan Sabha was strong in the Gaya area, but it had recently resolved to follow the Congress programme, and its conduct was improving, for they had officially dissociated themselves from some activities of lawlessness alleged against them. In Sind, group rivalry had never been acute among Congressmen; and in Assam, among oppositionists, there was a group of Forward Blocists which 'nobody takes seriously'. In Bombay, the strongest opposition group, the Socialists had lined up with the official Congress in preparation for satyagraha. As for other notable groups in Bombay, 'The Communists too have agreed to sign the pledge. But they combine with the Royists in finding fault with the official Congress, or organising strikes etc. They participated in the recent textile strike in Bombay in defiance of the BPCC decision. Not a single ward committee is in the hands of this group this year.'⁵⁰

The Bombay PCC was earnest in publicity work; after Ramgarh, Congressmen in Bombay organized 20 public meetings, 20 flag salutation ceremonies, three community dinners, one social workers' conference, and three public processions, by about the fourth week of May 1940. In Uttar Pradesh, in this period, 222 Congressmen toured the province, 884 meetings were organized, and the provincial Congress committee had issued about 75,000 notices and pamphlets. The programme of one meeting in each village was being organized in the districts. Spinning arrangements were satisfactory in 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh; public spinning demonstrations and khaddar bhandars were being organized. In Gujarat, khadi sales had gone up by about 30 per cent. The Charkha Department of the Sind PCC held spinning demonstrations at several places; regular classes for spinning would be opened, said the PCC, at Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and other places.⁵¹

Acharya Kripalani's Circular of 5 April 1940, on satyagraha preparations, said: 'in recording the names of active satyagrahis, there need be no anxiety to add to numbers', moral quality of soldiers in a non-violent fight being crucial. The registered satyagrahis would keep a diary of the

work they would do, spinning, visiting primary members and inducing them to use khadi and ply the charkha, paying visits to Harijan homes and removing their difficulties as far as possible. Registration was rather slow and confined to provincial and district committee members in most provinces till the end of April. In May, the provincial offices were in a position to make reports more satisfying to the leaders who were intent on promoting the satyagraha spirit. By the end of May 1940, the provinces with the largest number of 'Pledged Satyagrahis' were Uttar Pradesh (15,000), the North-West Frontier Province (6,000), Tamil Nadu (2,765), Bihar (1,991), Gujarat (1,771), and Andhra (1,370).⁵² The number of Passive Satyagrahis could hardly be compiled by any provincial Congress committee. These committees and the subordinate committees scarcely knew, or compiled with care for accuracy, the number of (permanent) Congressmen who were primary members under the reformed rules implemented in 1939/40.

How big was the Congress organization, considering the strength of membership only, in 1940/41? The AICC files of these years presently in the Nehru Memorial Museum Library do not provide any consolidated table of membership figures for the whole of India, nor are there very many references to primary membership in the provinces. It is doubtful if researches in the provincial and district Congress committee files (except possibly those of Tamil Nadu), where Congressmen were more methodical and painstaking in office work) would be rewarded with precise figures of membership in these years, pervaded as they were by an agitational mood all over the country. The Congress President, Maulana Azad, was reported (by Intelligence men of the Government) to have said in the course of speech delivered at the Purushottam Das Park, Allahabad, on 13 December 1940: 'Forty to fifty lakh of four-anna Congress members elect representatives for primary Congress committees which in turn elect representatives for higher committees.'⁵³ The Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India prepared in May 1941 the accompanying table of membership of the Indian National Congress.⁵⁴

Another Intelligence Bureau (Home Department) note dated Simla, 26 June 1941, said: 'Membership in Mahakoshal in the Central Provinces has since been reported by the provincial C.I.D. as 62,325. This figure is based on information obtained from district police authorities and may not, it is considered, be entirely accurate.'⁵⁵ The Bureau reported that though there was a marked fall in the number of Congress members in 1940/41, it was 'unsafe to assume that Congress has become unpopular or noticeably lost its influence over the masses', in the provinces formerly under Congress ministries.⁵⁶

The bureau chiefs attributed no mean importance to the Congress

<i>Congress Provinces</i>	<i>Membership</i>		
	1938/39	1939/40	1940/41
Ajmer-Merwara	13,151	6,700	6,250
Assam	37,321	56,633	56,000
Bengal	4,83,158	4,40,729	2,18,878 +25,186
Bihar	5,63,269	2,76,704	1,83,731
Bombay City & Suburbs	61,936	60,368	18,631
Maharashtra	1,48,544	1,15,137	87,240
Karnataka	1,72,113	75,426	28,312
Gujarat	92,418	80,101	55,231
Nagpur	44,854	42,418	22,638
Mahakoshal	1,26,554	1,10,119	Not received
Vidarbha	78,396	44,733	14,878
Delhi	19,423	11,956	7,974
Tamil Nadu	3,64,393	2,06,152	
Andhra	3,35,205	2,05,771	
Kerala	55,031	49,266	
NWFP	34,397	23,815	15,985
Orissa (Utkal)	1,98,325	1,26,126	45,792
Punjab	1,88,791	1,89,289	1,10,289
Sind	22,303	18,179	12,667
UP	14,72,456	8,33,830	2,58,826
TOTAL...	45,11,858	29,73,452	14,81,616

influence in the country and shrewdly identified the following factors in explaining the fall in the number of listed members of the Congress since 1939: First, the strict enlistment system that was introduced as part of the reform measures adopted in 1939 to stamp out corruption in the Congress organization; second, failure to renew membership in 1939/40; third, the defection of Royists and other leftists; fourth, the desertion of 'waverers', prompted by activities of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha in these years; fifth, the arrest (under the Defence of India Rules) of several important organizers immediately before enlistment; sixth, the slackening of interest in Congress patronage after the resignation of Congress ministries in the provinces; and seventh, the open split in the Congress in Bengal.⁵⁷ For an obvious reason, in this able analysis of numbers in Congress membership in May-June 1941, the Intelligence Bureau did not elaborate the point that numerous prospective four-anna members in 1940/41 could have been scared by the large number of arrests, imprisonment, internment and externment orders from March 1940 against left-wing Congressmen and the imprisonment of all-India and provincial Congress leaders offering individual satyagraha from

November 1940. To be a Congress member from about this time was to be a marked man, watched by the local police informers and common people, because of their avowed faith in the Gandhian way. The police watched Congressmen for signs of departure from non-violence in action, the people watched them with mixed feelings, or with apathy in their age-old manner, but as the Gandhian movement continued, month after month. Once it got started in the winter of 1940-1, there was no knowing how much of popular sympathy would go to benefit the Congress in the long run, and how much of the popular fear of the government would cause immediate erosion through fear of the consequences of participation in demonstrations of disobedience to alien rule.

The aspect of Congress organizational preparation to which Acharya Kripalani in his circulars to the provincial Congress committees in March and April 1940 put special emphasis was the setting up of training camps for satyagrahis.⁵⁸ Bihar, Karnataka, Mahakoshal, Maharashtra, Vidarbha and the North-West Frontier Province, were the first to report activity in this respect. The North-West Frontier PCC set up, by the third week of April 1940, training camps in the districts of Peshawar and Bannu. 'A camp will be held on May 4, 1940 attended by all the important workers of the Province. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan has started a tour of the province, from April 8 in connexion with Satyagraha campaign. The tour will last for a month.' Early in May, Bihar reported to the AICC office:

A Provincial Satyagraha Training Camp was started at Sonepur from April 20 which lasted for a week. The total strength of the campers was 291 of whom 147 were members of the PCC. The camp life was simple, interesting and active. There were no servants, sweepers, cooks, etc. All work in connection with the camp showed remarkable discipline. The daily routine was strictly adhered to. Drill and prayer were optional. The main features of the camp were spinning and political discourses. The total amount of yarn spun during the week was 432 miles and 172 yards. The camp attracted a continuous stream of visitors.'

Similar camps in the districts of Bihar were being started, 'Champaran has already begun.'⁵⁹

The Congress Volunteer Movement was closely watched by the police. All notable political parties and several communal groups of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, had organized bodies of volunteers; but the Indian National Congress and its allied bodies had the largest and best organization of trained volunteers in the country. 'A truculent spirit is growing among volunteers of all classes as a result of aggressive propaganda by irresponsible leaders and of training on military lines which is being vigorously imparted everywhere,' said an Intelligence

Bureau memorandum on the volunteer movement in India dated 2 January 1940.⁶⁰ The largest Congress Volunteer Corps was in the United Provinces; this corps, commanded by R.S. Pandit assisted by the Quami Seva Dal Board, had increased and was increasing rapidly in size. 'In spite of the declared intentions of the Congress high command to desist for the present from fostering any unconstitutional movement, Congress Committees throughout the province are engaged in a widespread drive to enlist volunteers for the Quami Seva Dal in preparation for the civil disobedience campaign.' At the end of June 1940, the Quami Seva Dal in the United Provinces had 30,178 members.⁶¹ In this month, the Congress Working Committee considered a report prepared by R.S. Pandit on the Congress Volunteer Movement, and set up a committee consisting of Vallabhbhai Patel, Achyut Patwardhan, Mian Iftikharuddin, R.S. Pandit and a representative of the Khudai Khidmatgars to prepare uniform rules of training and service for Congress Volunteers throughout the country.⁶²

Early in July, Gandhi warned all patriots: 'No power, whether foreign or swadeshi, can tolerate private armies.' The AICC General Secretary explained that no Congress volunteer organization could be framed or maintained except on the basis of non-violence.⁶³ Because of the climate of fear and suspicion produced by the activities of communalists and by the news of Allied reverses in Europe, the Congress leaders decided to form a National Defence Force and to train people in villages and other areas in organized self-defence and in protecting life and property in the event of serious disturbances. But no active steps were taken except at Allahabad where ten such centres were opened, according to a police report received by the middle of August 1940.⁶⁴ In July, at Jawaharlal Nehru's insistence, the PCC in the United Provinces recognized that the organization of a Defence Force which permitted the use of violence for purposes of self-defence would inevitably conflict with the non-violent Quami Seva Dal. Further, the PCC decided that it was desirable that the separate 'self-defence corps' should not be developed into a regular organization and that such force should be strictly limited. These decisions were required to restrain the United Provinces Congress Volunteer Board, which had issued a circular urging the organization of a National Defence Force of one lakh volunteers, inviting the co-operation of all organizations wishing to further national unity, and proposing to collect 25 lakhs of rupees to defray the cost of the scheme.⁶⁵

The development of the Congress Volunteer Movement was reviewed in detail in a 'Further Memorandum' on 'Volunteer Movement in India' prepared by the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India in August 1940. 'Since the beginning of the present year, there has been unparalleled intensification of the volunteer movement throughout the country.' 'The Congress and its allied bodies still possess the largest

volunteer organization in the country; the Khaksars (despite their reverses in the Punjab), the Muslim League Volunteer Corps, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the Ram Sena and a host of communal and political volunteer corps of varying strength and efficiency occupy the remainder of the stage.' The PCC in the United Provinces had prepared a scheme of training of volunteers in physical drill, lathi exercise, first aid, fire fighting, control of crowds at meetings and Congress constructive work, with a view to increasing the efficiency of the Quami Seva Dal. 'Joint parades of Congress, Ahrar and other volunteers have lately been held in Lucknow and a sub-committee has been appointed, with Kesho Deo Malaviya as the convener, to coordinate the activities of the various pro-Congress volunteer organizations.' In Bombay Province, Congress volunteers were known variously as Gandhi Seva Sena, Seva Dal, the National Guards, and the National Volunteer Corps; they kept order at Congress meetings and demonstrations; the total strength of Congress volunteers was 2,635 approximately. In the Central Provinces, the Congress Sainik Dal had 1,027 volunteers, and these were largely confined to Nagpur, Jabalpur, Akola and Betul districts; they were trained in the use of the lathi but carried no weapons when assisting Congress functions. In Bengal about 1,540 volunteers were enlisted, but properly co-ordinated volunteering work was impossible owing to the simultaneous existence of two rival provincial Congress committees. In Madras, the Congress volunteer movement was active mainly in Kerala where the provincial Congress committee dominated by leftists had taken keen interest in the matter. In Malabar about 2,500 volunteers were enlisted; in Tamil Nadu and Andhra a small corps of 'officers' had been trained for raising and training Congress volunteers. In Punjab, the Congress had not organized a volunteer corps; this was due partly to dissensions among the Congress leaders in the province, and partly to the discouraging effect of the ban placed early in the year by the Punjab Government on volunteers practising military drill. In the North-West Frontier Province, the Red Shirt (the Khudai Khidmatgars) led by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was the sole Congress volunteer organization; its strength had remained stationary at 15,940 approximately, in the past few months. In Baluchistan, the pro-Congress Anjuman-i-Watan had recently formed a volunteer body called the Khidmatgaran-i-Watan; it was then yet in infancy.⁶⁶

Both the government and the Congress volunteer organization leaders in 1940-1 remembered the notable role of the volunteers in maintaining popular opposition to the government in the Civil Disobedience of 1931. In the last week of April 1940, R.S. Pandit visited Ahmedabad, Bombay, Poona, Dharwar and Hubli. At Hubli, he held discussions with Dr N.S. Hardikar whose famed Hindustani Seva Dal of Karnataka was declared illegal and forcibly dispersed in 1932, during the Civil Disobedi-

ence Movement. Hardikar's Hindustani Seva Dal had inspired similar movements under the same name in Andhra, Bombay, Maharashtra, Nagpur, Mahakoshal, Vidarbha, Gujarat and Ajmer-Merwara. These were all declared illegal in 1932, but started reviving after the Congress set up ministries in several provinces. In his Interim Report on Volunteer Organization in Congress Provinces submitted to Maulana Azad in June 1940, R.S. Pandit observed that a certain uniformity in drill, discipline, words of command in Hindustani, slogans and the like, had been preserved in the Congress volunteer organizations in the central and western parts of the country because of the old Hindustani Seva Dal tradition. 'We thus already have a nucleus,' he said. Pandit recommended that volunteer training in all provinces be guided by the Congress Working Committee through a Central Committee devoted to the volunteer movement with a view to introducing uniformity in organization, training, and words of command in Hindustani. In the North-West Frontier Province, however, the use of Pushto words of command was to be retained by the Khudai Khidmatgars. Pandit proposed to visit several Congress headquarters, 'for in the case of some of these there is at present no volunteer organization at all while others have just made a beginning'.⁶⁷

How widespread was the Congress organizational network in 1940-1? After the Ramgarh Congress, the AICC office at Allahabad requested the provincial Congress committee offices to send precise information about the number, location, strength and condition of the subordinate Congress committees. Classified statistical information about Congress committees was not readily available; not all provincial committees could send to Allahabad, by the time Satyagraha started, the addresses of office bearers and of offices of district committees. Yet, a mere enumeration of the Congress districts in 1940 in several Congress provinces compiled by us from the AICC office files in this period may give, more than any thing else, to the readers of this History, a fair indication of the all-India spread of the Indian National Congress.⁶⁸

Ajmer-Merwara had 14 Congress committees; of these three were village committees. Assam had 13 district Congress committees. Andhra had 14 district Congress committees and 65 town Congress committees, Bengal had 33 district committees. Bihar, a stronghold of right wing Congress had 16 district committees; these were Patna (PO Kadamkuan), Gaya, Shahabad (PO Arrah), Darbhanga (PO Laheriasarai), Muzaffarpur, Saran (PO Chapra), Champaran (PO Motihari), Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Purnea, Santhal Pargana (Dumka), Palamau (Daltonganj), Ranchi, Hazaribagh, Manbhum (PO Purulia), Singhbhum (PO Jamshedpur, formerly at PO Chaibasa). The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had seven subordinate committees; these were

Bombay Suburban, Thané (PO Bordi), Kulaba (Alibag), Ratnagiri, Satara, Ahmednagar, Sholapur, Nasik (PO Malegaon), West Khandesh (PO Dhulia), East Khandesh (PO Jalgaon), and Puné. In Gujarat, there were five district and two city Congress committees. In Karnataka, there were 17 district, a total of 94 taluka, group and town Congress committees. The Nagpur prantik (district) committee had under it one nagar (town), 15 taluka, and 75 gram (village) Congress committees. The Mahakoshal Prantiya Congress Committee had a total of 78 subordinate (zila, nagar, sahar, and tahasil) committees of Congressmen. In Vidarbha, there were four district, four nagar, and 21 taluka Congress committees. There was a Congress committee in Delhi but the ward and taluka Congress committees in Delhi existed only in name in the spring of 1940. The Tamil Nadu PCC, reported that there were 52 primary Congress committees (taluka and town committees included) grouped under 11 district committees. These were as follows: Madras (PO Alwerpet), Chingleput, South Arcot District (Cuddalore), Tanjore (PO Koradecheri), Trichinopoly, Madura, Ramnad (PO Srivilliputhur), Tinnevely, Coimbatore, North Arcot District (Ranipet), and Salem (PO Tiruchengode). Andhra had 14 district and 65 town Congress committees. The AICC office did not have a list of the number and names of the subordinate Congress committees under the Kerala PCC. The PCC Office in the North-West Frontier Province took many months to inform the AICC office at Allahabad that they had seven district Congress committees in the Pathan country: Hazara (PO Hanehin), Mardan (PO Bamkhel), Malakand Agency (PO Bamkhel), Peshawar City, Kohat, Bannu (PO Lakki Marwat), and Dera Ismail Khan (PO Potah). The Utkal PCC had seven district Congress committees: Cuttack, Ganjam (Berhampur), Puri, Balasore, Sambalpur, Koraput (Jeypur), and Singhbhum (Chakradharpur). The PCC in the Punjab had 31 district Congress committees, 144 city Congress committees and a total Congress membership of 192,495, of whom 639 had signed the Satyagraha Pledge by 24 May 1940. Sind had six district Congress committees, but the total number of Congress workers was about 146 only. The United Provinces had the largest number of Congress committees, 48 district committees and a total of about 2000 subordinate committees (town and mandal). By 10 June 1940, about 15,200 Congressmen in the United Provinces had signed the Satyagraha Pledge.⁶⁹

What was the total for all India? There is no way of determining it precisely. We learn from the Congress General Secretary's Report for the years 1940-6 that, following the call given by the 53rd Session of the Congress at Ramgarh in March 1940 for preparations for satyagraha, about 35,000 Satyagrahis were enrolled and that many of them had not shown themselves enthusiastic in carrying out the terms of the pledge. 'While there was good work done in some provinces, there was indiffe-

rent response in others.⁷⁰ The impetus given to the constructive programme through Satyagrahi training camps, growth of the volunteer movement, and the closing up of the Congress ranks were three of the notable gains of the Satyagraha preparations in the months immediately following Ramgarh.

6. Concern for National Planning and National Unity

From the Congress viewpoint, there were three notable pieces of news relating to Indian politics on 1 May 1940. First, an appeal issued from Bombay by R.P. Paranjpye, President of the All-India National Liberal Federation, to Congress leaders not to launch civil disobedience and to all parties to accept in principle the British offer of dominion status after the war, and negotiate to obtain it by some agreed or determined date. Second, the conclusion at Delhi of the four-day session of the All-India Azad (Independent) Muslim Conference, a new party making its first appearance with the support of Congressmen. And third, the meeting of the National Planning Committee, under the presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at Bombay, to formulate in detail, with the help of experts, plans for the kind of welfare state Congressmen and other non-party nationalists hoped to set up in India after achieving Independence. The Congress was the only political party which laboured on national planning in a big way in the years before independence.

The idea of a welfare state lay in the beginnings of reform made by Congress ministries in several provinces in 1938-9, in the fields of prohibition, land revenue remission, agriculturists' relief legislation, tenancy rights, zamindari, debt redemption, moneylending, education, textile labour laws, sugar factories control, irrigation, Harijan uplift and social welfare. At its first meeting held in December 1938, the National Planning Committee, preparatory to an Indian Planning Commission, drafted an elaborate questionnaire addressed to experts in the country. At its second meeting, held in June 1939, the Planning Committee appointed 27 sub-committees divided under seven heads: agriculture, industries, demographic relations, transport and communication, commerce and finance, public welfare and education. It had a well-staffed secretariat headed by K.T. Shah as Honorary General Secretary; it received active cooperation of many public bodies, chambers of commerce, trade unions, provincial administrations, and big Indian States like Hyderabad, Mysore and Baroda. At its third meeting, early in May 1940, the Planning Committee reviewed reports submitted by 17 sub-committees, and recommended the establishment of a National Water Resources Board, the nationalization of the Reserve Bank, and the de-linking of the rupee from sterling. The Planning Committee recommendations represented the modern socialistic approach to economic development of the Congress.⁷¹ Its work under the chairmanship of

Jawaharlal, supplemented, with draft plans and collection of valuable statistical information, the better-known and simpler Gandhian Constructive Programme adopted by Congressmen as part of their Independence Day pledge in 1940 and made obligatory work for those signing the Satyagraha Pledge to become 'Active Satyagrahis'.

In May 1940, the Congress was neither in a hurry to launch a civil disobedience movement nor in a mood to appease the Muslim League. Appeasement of the Muslim League would have taken the life out of the Indian National Congress, the grand fifty-five-year old organization of the Indian awakening to the worldwide forces of nationalism, democracy and secularism. Mohammed Ali Jinnah (born 1876) had been a reputed Congress leader, before the phenomenon of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (born 1869) appeared on the scene to turn the Congress, in 1919-21, into a party with an extra-parliamentary programme, seeking contact with the masses living in rural areas, and adopting non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience as its main methods of struggle.

In 1940, there was hardly any prospect of a settlement of differences between the Congress and the League or of agreement between Gandhi and Jinnah who had different purposes and styles of statesmanship.⁷² The Nehru-Jinnah exchange of letters in December 1939 bore little fruit for the Congress beyond confirming the conviction of Nehru that the Congress-League differences were not communal but political. Nehru found Jinnah, in their meetings, talking little of Hindu-Muslim communal differences and much of Congress-League political differences.⁷³ The Congress was not willing to give to the League the recognition it demanded of its claim to be the sole representative organization of the Indian Muslims, there being several other organizations of Muslim communities supporting the Congress platform of secular national unity.⁷⁴ In the last week of February 1940, replying in the columns of the *Harijan* to a correspondent who questioned the authority of the Congress to make any communal deal, with the Muslim League or others, generous to Muslims at the expense of Hindus, Gandhi said that the proper organization for making any communal deal on behalf of the Hindus was not the Congress. But Gandhi upheld the right of the Congress to be treated as a great national organization representing all communities living in the country. 'It is not by design but by accident of Hindus being politically more conscious than the others, that the Congress contains a majority of Hindus.' 'As history proves the Congress is a joint creation of Moslems, Christians, Parsis, Hindus, and the Congress in spite of all that may be said to the contrary, retains that character.'⁷⁵

In March, the Muslim League finally adopted the theory of nationhood by communal allegiance. On 22 March 1940, at the 27th annual

session of the Muslim League held at Lahore, Jinnah declared that the League demanded, on behalf of the 'Muslim nation in India' a homeland territory and state separate from a state for non-Muslims or Hindus: 'the establishment of two national states, each autonomous but bound together by international agreements'. Territorial adjustments between the proposed states could be made by negotiation.⁷⁶

The Pakistan project was thus formally launched by Jinnah, but he maintained in his public statements that he was for a compromise and an honorable settlement between Hindus and Muslims and other communal minorities. In an obvious reference to the Congress, the party standing for national unity and independence, Jinnah said: 'the sooner the idea of any organization, however great, representing all-India is given up, the better.'⁷⁷ The Hindu Mahasabha leaders were quick to react to the Pakistan idea. In the course of his presidential address at the first Tamil Nadu Mahasabha Conference held at Salem on 23 March, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the Mahasabha president, blamed the Congress for stating that swaraj could not be achieved without Hindu-Muslim unity. He declared: 'The objective of the Hindu Mahasabha was the consolidation of the Hindus with the ultimate goal of absolute independence for India. Hindus did not mind if Muslims considered themselves as a separate race, but the proposal to divide the country could not be permitted.'⁷⁸ R.P. Paranjpye, President of the National Liberal Federation of India, issued an appeal, from Bombay on 28 March, to the Congress and the Muslim League 'to give up their extreme positions'; at the same time, he appealed to the government 'to rally all moderate opinion in the country by taking steps to put India on the road to freedom'.⁷⁹ In the next month, Paranjpye and other prominent public figures in Bombay began considering the question of forming a 'central party' in India. On 6 April, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* an article, 'A Baffling Situation', referring to the step taken by Muslim League at its Lahore session, but concluded that it did not make a civil disobedience movement against the British rule an impossibility. Congressmen were preparing for satyagraha. The next week, in the *Harijan*, Gandhi declared that he would never be a willing party to the vivisection of India, and that he would employ every non-violent means to prevent such a calamity. On 15 April at Lucknow, in his address to the first United Provinces Sikh Conference, Master Tara Singh declared: 'The "Pakistan" scheme may prove to be a declaration of civil war and therefore the proposal is mad.'⁸⁰

From this period, the pronouncements of British authorities implied more clearly than in the past that the Congress by its unwillingness to make a settlement of differences with the Muslim League prevented the British Government from transferring power in British India to the

Indians representing popular elements. The attainment of dominion status by India after the war could be delayed further by the failure of the diverse elements in India's national life and other interests in India to come together in a realistic and responsible manner to take delivery on India's behalf of the goods of self-rule. On 18 April 1940, in course of a debate in the House of Lords on his request for legislation for extending by one year the rule of provincial governors (under Section 93 of the India Act of 1935) in the former 'Congress provinces', Lord Zetland, the Secretary of State, observed that the Congress party had raised in the minds of many Muslims apprehensions which only they themselves could allay, and that, for any advance towards self-rule in India, a substantial measure of agreement among the communities of India was necessary. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad issued a statement on 22 April, saying: 'The issue is simple. Is the British Government prepared to admit the right of self-determination for India? If she is, then there can be only one proper method of finally deciding all the problems, that is, they should be referred to the elected representatives of India.'⁸¹ In the past the Muslim League had not done well in the elections for seats in legislatures, compared to the Congress performance in practically all provinces.⁸² Neither the Muslim League nor the British Government were willing to refer to the elected representatives the problems relating to self-rule by Indians. The League and the government appeared to be firm in rejecting the Congress demand for an entirely self-determined constitution for India.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Syed Mahmud and Asaf Ali, supported by Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh of Sind, and leaders of Ahrars, Momins, Shias, and Ittihad-i-Millat and Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind, organized the first All-India Azad (independent) Muslim Conference to organize the nationalist Muslims asserting the 'one country one nation' principle in opposition to Jinnah's demand for Pakistan based on the two-nation theory. The conference opened at New Delhi with considerable enthusiasm and *éclat* on 27 April 1940 under the chairmanship of Allah Baksh.⁸³ On 28 April, the conference adopted a resolution declaring: 'India, with its geographical and political boundaries, is an indivisible whole and as such it is the common homeland of all citizens, irrespective of race or religion, who are joint owners of its resources.' Another resolution, adopted on 29 April, declared the Muslim League's scheme of partitioning India as impracticable and harmful to Indian interest generally and to Muslims in particular who were scattered in all parts of the country which was their native land as much as of other communities marching towards independence. The Conference set up a Board and permanent party office at Delhi, and set up a provincial office at Allahabad in the United Provinces in association with the Minorities Department of the Congress organization.⁸⁴ The Azad Muslim Confer-

ence did not have much of an organization, because within a few months after its birth its principal inspiring personalities, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Asaf Ali were imprisoned in connection with the Congress civil disobedience movement. The British Government turned a deaf ear to the Azad Muslims, though they deserved to be heard and in 1941-2 their chairman, Allah Baksh, was premier of Sind.

7. Desire for Honourable Understanding

A combination of events: bewildering news in quick succession of the developments in the European war in the spring and summer of 1940, of the German blitzkrieg, the fall of France; the desperate condition of the British people at home; the consequent feeling of uncertainty as to the fate of Britain and her empire; a demand widespread among people of moderate liberal opinion that some sort of 'national' government should aid the government in organizing the defence of the country and in running the administration at this juncture of the war; and a debate, among the members of the Congress Working Committee in which Mahatma Gandhi participated, on the question whether the Congress should participate in 'defence', or the 'war effort', provided the British Government made an unequivocal promise of granting independence, led the Congress to adopt two resolutions so controversial that they threatened, for a few weeks, to split the Congress. These resolutions were the Wardha Statement of June, on non-violence and defence of Free India, and the 'Delhi-Poona Offer' of July 1940, of conditional co-operation to the British Government.

Detailed news of the war on land, sea and air in Europe was published by every major newspaper in English and in Indian languages. People gathered in streets and homes to listen to news and commentaries broadcast by All India Radio, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and Radio Berlin. The Anglo-French expeditionary Forces failed to save Norway from occupation by Germany in April 1940. The German armies invaded the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg on 10 May; between 28 May and 4 June, about 215,000 British and 120,000 French troops, sans equipment and armaments, were rescued by boat, from the beaches of Dunkirk.⁸⁵ Italy declared war against France and Great Britain on 10 June; five days later, Soviet Russia invaded Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. On 22 June, the French Government headed by Marshal Petain, concluded an armistice with Germany, providing for the surrender to German forces of control of three-fifths of France. The Battle of Britain began in July 1940; it did not abate till the opening of the Russian front in June 1941. In response to appeals from the British prime minister, the United States Government sent larger and larger shipments of military supplies to Britain, from about July 1940. In India the prestige of Great Britain, of the English as a nation ruling over other people by

virtue of their incomparable power of arms, money, science and enterprise, blessed by lucky stars, suffered irreparable damage in 1940. Because of panic in the stock-exchanges in Calcutta and Bombay, withdrawals of money from banks, refusal or reluctance in some parts of the country to accept paper currency, and rumours that the British Government was nearly bankrupt because of the war, the authorities had to issue notifications that refusal to accept paper currency was punishable and that the financial position of the Government of India was in some respects nearly as strong as that of the United States of America.⁸⁶ Public listening to enemy broadcasts was prohibited by government order,⁸⁷ and the authorities showed greater readiness than in 1939 in applying the Defence of India Rules to arrest nationalists who were accentuating, by spoken and printed words, an idea floating in the wind that England's predicament was nationalist India's opportunity.

An embodiment of the British imperial hubris in relation to India since the early years of the 20th century, Winston Churchill, became the Prime Minister of Great Britain on 10 May 1940. He headed a national coalition ministry including Conservatives, who were inclined to regard the Congress in India as a party of agitators representing the politically advanced 'Hindu India' and Laborites, who were pronouncedly pro-Congress in sympathy. L.S. Amery, a Conservative, who became the Secretary of State for India in Churchill's ministry, was a good debater in parliament; along with Churchill and the viceroy in India, he believed that people in England and members of parliament and liberal minded Americans were improperly educated by news media about the complexities of the Indian empire and of the viewpoints and aspirations of millions of British subjects who, unlike Gandhi and the Congress people, did not cry for a united and independent India.

Churchill introduced into the British war effort tremendous zeal for victory and a new scale of bigness in preparing India as a base of military operations and supply, and in exploiting Indian resources in mercenaries, money and material, for the defence of the British interests in Asia and Africa. Under Churchill and Amery, Linlithgow regarded himself as a 'war Viceroy', on whom the outcome of the Second World War and the survival of the empire depended to no small extent.⁸⁸ The political aspect of Churchill's Indian policy was equally defensive, in the sense that it was calculated to defend or maintain the system of 1919 in the Central Government of India and Section 93 conditions under the Act of 1935 in the former 'Congress provinces'. This device ensured smooth government in India by the governor general and the governors with the aid of the civil service and without reference to the 'popular element' in the legislatures.

In view of the startling developments in the war in Western Europe,

many Congressmen in May and June 1940 would have welcomed some sort of national government at the centre and a return of Congressmen to office in the provinces, provided the British Government changed its hostile attitude towards the Congress and gave an unambiguous promise of independence to India. Congressmen would not collaborate with an 'empire'; they were willing to defend their country, even to fight in alliance with the British people against Nazism and Fascism, if the bonds of slavery were removed from India. Asaf Ali said at Delhi on 15 May 1940: 'The time has come when given an honourable understanding with Great Britain a national coalition Government responsible to the people can be immediately formed in India.'⁸⁹ S. Satyamurti observed on 26 May (the day fixed by the Government of India as a day of 'national prayer' for the victory of Great Britain and her allies), 'I pray that God may give victory to democracy, freedom and liberty not only in Europe but also in the whole world including India and China.'⁹⁰ This was probably made not without reference to the first statement of policy by L.S. Amery in the House of Commons on 23 May that the attainment by India of full and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth was the goal of Indian policy, and that after the war the schemes of the Act of 1935 were to be open for re-examination. In spite of Amery's disappointing policy statement, Rajagopalachari said at the Tinnevely District Political Conference at Ambasundaram on 9 June: 'I consider it our duty, however unpleasant and unreasonable it may appear on the surface, to reiterate with all the force we can command, our claim that Britain should at this supreme hour of her difficulty declare India once and for all time free and independent, and then India should declare herself a new-born ally on the side of England and France.'⁹¹ Rajagopalachari was in favour of setting up a responsible government in each province, to restore public morale.

After the fall of France, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* (25 May 1940) that he would do nothing wilfully to embarrass Britain. On 8 June, he advised people not to get panicky, and not to withdraw deposits from the bank fearing the bankruptcy of the government and disorder in the country. Addressing a public meeting at Nainital on 12 June, Maulana Azad condemned Germany and Italy for their aggression in Europe. In these days there were private and public appeals to Gandhiji to call all parties together. In reply, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* on 15 June: 'These good friends forget one central fact. The Congress, which professes to speak for India and wants unadulterated independence, cannot strike a common measure of agreement with those who do not.' 'Gandhiji agrees with the line I have taken up,' wrote Jawaharlal to V.K. Krishna Menon, from Wardha on 16 May. He advised Menon, the Special Congress representative in London, that Congress policy would not change, by the new development in the war.⁹² A few days earlier at Bombay, on

10 May, Jawaharlal said in a statement to the press: 'While India is completely opposed to the idea of the triumph of Nazism, it is no good asking her to come to the rescue of a tottering imperialism which still presumes to speak of her with arrogance and in terms of domination.'⁹³ Jawaharlal was not shocked by the turn in the war in Europe; 'the British Empire had its day', he wrote to Rajendra Prasad on 16 May. Collaboration in war would mean that the Indian National Congress admitted as good the whole concept of imperialism, the fundamental basis of the British rule. The only respectable course for Congressmen was to maintain towards the European war the attitude adopted in 1939 and to continue preparations for satyagraha already started according to the Ramgarh Resolution. There was no danger to India of external aggression in the immediate future, and from the military point of view Congress collaboration would make no sudden material change in the situation regarding armed resistance to invaders. 'Modern warfare demands very special mechanised training and we [the Congress] cannot produce this, in large numbers, within a short time.'⁹⁴ On the same day, 16 May, Jawaharlal wrote to Maulana Azad to say that it would be wrong to change the Congress line of action declared at Ramgarh. 'Our enrolment and training of satyagrahis must go on. I do not think that satyagraha should be started soon, even if we are ready for it. But the possibility of a loosening of central authority demands that we should be ready to meet any situation that might arise.' Only on the basis of independence to India could the Congress talk of joining hands with the British people in the defence of India. 'To say that because Nazism is worse than British imperialism, therefore we prefer to be ruled by the British, is to me the height of degradation. If we are so helpless that we cannot look after ourselves, then the sooner we perish the better. We are not going to change masters. We shall fight against all domination.'⁹⁵ From Wardha, Jawaharlal went to Lucknow and there, at a meeting of the United Provinces PCC, he told Congressmen:

Events are marching fast and they will dictate our policy far more than individuals. I consider the work I have been doing in the National Planning Committee important as it helps us to form a real picture of our objectives in India. Without a clear picture in our mind of what India is going to be when independent, we will waste our time and energy when the opportunity comes.

Meanwhile, Congressmen should prepare for satyagraha and convert the Congress from an electioneering organization to its traditional role of a fighting organization. 'There can never be an end to our struggle till India is independent.' The PCC adopted a Resolution, drafted by Jawaharlal, declaring:

The Committee is convinced that the decision of the Ramgarh Congress that satyagraha is inevitable and should be prepared for, must be acted upon in its entirety and nothing has happened which should be allowed to vary it. The new turn in world events makes it all the more imperative that India's independence should be secured and that the Indian people should determine the form to be given to this.⁹⁶

Jawaharlal was at Lahore attending a satyagraha camp on 24 and 25 May, at the invitation of Mian Iftikaruddin. 'Satyagraha has no relation to the war. It will be started when considered opportune by Mahatma Gandhi. But we will not choose to strike simply because the British Government is in great difficulties.' In declaring, in this speech at Lahore on 25 May, that he would not take any course of action out of spite, to embarrass the British people, Jawaharlal reminded all of the importance of the Congress organization, especially in a time of crisis: 'If the present order collapses the only organization which will be able to control the situation in India is the Congress and I therefore want everybody to give his loyalty to it instead of always criticising it.'⁹⁷

Another effect of the events in Europe in the summer of 1940 was a fresh sprouting, in the Congress Working Committee at its meeting at Wardha from 17 to 21 June 1940, of one of the historic organizational, and emotional, questions with which senior Congressmen had had to deal periodically, with tact and wisdom, ever since 1920: 'What to do with Gandhiji?' Gandhi was a leader of the type celebrated by Tagore in his song, one of his odes to the Mahatma as it were, 'Akla Chalo': 'Go alone, Go alone, Go alone, if none will hearken to your call to join in the arduous enterprise.' In May and June 1940, following news of an intensification of the war and great destruction in Western Europe, Mahatma Gandhi felt that India should not involve herself in this or any war, and that free India should set an example of pacifism in the society of nations. An unadulterated pacifist, he thought non-violence should be made a weapon of organized defence in international struggles also. He held that, for the cause of building a civilization based on non-violence, the Congress should declare, at this stage in 1940, that free India would eschew all violence and would maintain no army to defend the country. Defence in the age-old fashion with arms to kill and destroy enemies would maintain the old social habit of violence. Gandhi argued that it was not enough that the Congress should condemn all imperialisms, the British, the Nazi, the Fascist and other varieties. His sense of 'satya' (truth, the inner voice) demanded that he should renounce, if events made it necessary, his ties with the Congress and preach, without the aid of the Congress organization his message of ahimsa to India and the war-torn world. Gandhi had raised this issue more than once earlier in conversations with Congress leaders, in September 1938 when

the AICC met at Delhi, in September 1939 when the Second World War broke out, in November 1939 when he went to meet the viceroy, and again at Ramgarh in March 1940.⁹⁸

The Wardha statement of 21 June embodied the majority opinion in the Congress Working Committee that they could not go all the way with Mahatma Gandhi in the matter of prescribing non-violence as a method of dealing with external aggression and internal disorder. 'The problem of the achievement of national freedom has now to be considered along with the allied one of its maintenance and the defence of the country against possible aggression and internal disorder.'

While the Working Committee hold that the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in their struggle for independence, the Committee cannot ignore the present imperfections and failings in this respect of the human elements that they have to deal with, and the possible dangers in a period of transition and dynamic change, until the Congress has acquired non-violent control over the people in adequate measure and the people have imbibed sufficiently the lesson of organized non-violence.

The Committee recognized 'that he [Gandhiji] should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India and the world in regard to external aggression and internal disorder.' In this period of crisis, the Congress 'should not be merely a roll of vast numbers of inactive members.' 'Congress committees should organise, wherever necessary, people in villages and other areas for self-defence and in order to maintain a sense of public security in their respective areas.' Congressmen could not, under the existing political conditions, associate themselves with the War Committees and Civic Guards organized by the government. It was announced that all members of the Working Committee were expected to keep themselves in readiness to obey urgent summons to meet at frequent intervals, and that the All India Congress Committee would meet in the last week of July.⁹⁹

Linlithgow and Gandhi talked for three hours at Simla on 29 June. The viceroy held that exploratory processes were necessary before constitution-making and that there should be a transitional period before independence. He thought the British Government might be prepared to make a precise announcement regarding the grant of dominion status within a reasonable period of time and by a certain date, and that, meanwhile, he proposed to seek the co-operation of the Indian parties in governing India. Gandhi told Linlithgow that at this meeting he spoke on an entirely personal basis, and that he believed that nothing but a

declaration of complete independence of India would be acceptable to the Congress, whose views had hardened over the past few months. He doubted the ability of British statesmen to do the right thing, a promise of complete independence to India, at this juncture.¹⁰⁰ In the light of his talk with the viceroy, Gandhi wrote at Delhi on 1 July an article headed 'Some Vital Problems' which was published in the *Harijan* on 6 July.¹⁰¹ The viceroy was again conferring with leaders of political parties, Gandhi wrote, and things were likely to move rapidly; to decide their future course of action patriots would do well to consider for themselves the following questions: First, whether dominion status of the Westminster variety could be acceptable for India; second, how to provide, in an India-Great Britain settlement of new status, for the security of India against internal disorder and external aggression; and third, should the Congress accept, in the interim period, an offer of joining the Governor General's Executive Council at the centre and of resuming office by the Congress ministries in the provinces? To help his readers in deliberating on these questions, Gandhi declared his personal views clearly: 'The Government of India have no other occupation but that of preparing India for defending Britain.' No power had eyes on India, said Gandhi, except as a British possession. 'The offer of enlarging the Viceroy's Executive Council is on the taps. The Congress cannot countenance it, so long as it swears by independence and non-violence.'

Gandhi attended the emergency meeting of the Congress Working Committee which began at Birla House in New Delhi on 3 July. Next day in the afternoon, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya also attended the meeting, on special invitation. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Acharya Narendra Deva, and Achyut Patwardhan were the other leaders specially invited to this meeting which was attended by the Working Committee members in full strength. The meeting from 3 to 7 July was five days of 'tremendous heart-searching', as Gandhi wrote on 8 July in a statement on the resolution adopted on the political situation. 'Rajaji was the framer of the resolution. He was as certain of his position as I was of mine. His persistency and courage and utter humility brought him converts. Sardar Patel was his greatest prize.' In voting, five members of the Working Committee remained neutral. 'He [Rajaji] would not have even thought of bringing up his resolution if I had chosen to prevent him. But I give my comrades the same credit for earnestness and self-confidence that I claim for myself. I had long known that we were drifting away from each other in our outlook upon the political problems that face us.' For good or evil, the Working Committee had taken a big step, by offering to co-operate with the British Government in organizing the defence of India.¹⁰²

This offer was made by the Working Committee with two conditions

or proposals for breaking the political deadlock. First, the acknowledgement of Indian independence; and second, the formation of a provisional 'National Government' commanding the confidence of the legislatures. The resolution on the political situation adopted at Delhi on 7 July, said:

The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that the acknowledgement by Great Britain of the complete Independence of India, is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain and are, therefore, of opinion that such an unequivocal declaration should be immediately made and that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre, which, though formed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of the Responsible Governments in the provinces.

Without such changes in the system of governing India, it would be hardly proper to say that the Indian nation supported the British war voluntarily. If such changes were adopted, the Congress would be able, said the Resolution, 'to throw in its full weight in the efforts for the effective organisation of the Defence of the country'. The text of the above resolution was an amended version made by Rajaji in the light of the committee's long discussions on two drafts: Rajaji's first draft and a draft submitted earlier, but later withdrawn by Gandhiji.¹⁰³ The draft prepared by Gandhiji would have involved withdrawal of the Wardha Statement and appeals to India and Britain to offer organized but non-violent resistance to aggressors. Rajaji said he missed reality in Gandhiji's draft. Bhulabhai reminded the Working Committee that in not so remote a past they were calling for the Indianization of the army, and that at the moment eleven hundred Indians were being trained as officers in the armed forces. Sardar Patel said:

When we passed the first resolution in September [1939] all Congressmen have been thinking and working on those lines: 'If such and such a declaration is made, we give our co-operation.' This is a key-note of our attitude. Gandhiji has called it moral support. We have interpreted it differently. If a declaration is made, we give support, moral and otherwise.

Jawaharlal urged that the question of full support to the British Government could be decided by India when freed from subjection. 'It is folly,' said Jawarharlal, 'to give them help when the British power is tottering.' Gandhiji's personal position was of an extreme pacifist; regarding the Congress policy, he would not advise the Congress to extend to Great Britain, one of the warring parties, anything beyond moral support which would mean much, said Gandhiji, in the eyes of the world. Rajaji's arguments in support of his own draft were briefly:

first, co-operation with the British war effort should not be ruled out by the Congress, in view of the desperate condition of Britain and the impact of the war news on the Indian situation; second, maintaining a promise of Indian Independence as the irreducible minimum, a reasonable demand of the party could be made for providing a basis of discussion with the viceroy who, as Gandhiji had felt, was in earnest to get the support of the Congress at this juncture; third, the question of Gandhiji's leadership need not confuse thinking to some purpose for making the Congress attitude positive in regard to India's administration and defence; fourth, being obliged to function on the political plane with human material as they were, the Congress could not promote absolute or unqualified non-violence. What was the Congress? 'Ours is a political organization, not working for non-violence but for the political ideal. We are working in competition with other parties.'

The Congress president appreciated Mahatma Gandhi's view that people take up arms for defence but finally use them for aggression. 'This is what happened with Islam. The Prophet took up arms for sheer self-defence, but his followers used them for aggression and conquest.' Regarding the immediate course of action to be adopted, Congress should maintain as separate, the issue of India's defence from the issue of non-violence as Congress policy in the struggle for freedom. 'We have right', said Maulana Azad, 'to go back on Wardha resolution'. Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Bhulabhai, Jamnalal, Syed Mahmud, Asaf Ali and Pattabhi voted for the amended resolution brought forward by Rajaji. Jawaharlal, Acharya Narendra Deva, and Achyut Patwardhan voted against the resolution. Shrimati Sarojini Naidu was neutral. Rajendra Prasad, Shankarrao Deo, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, and Acharya Kripalani were neutral on grounds of non-violence. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan also voted against the resolution on grounds of non-violence. He announced on 8 July that he was resigning from the Working Committee on this issue. 'It affects all our life, and only that has permanent value. Unless we learn this lesson of non-violence fully, we shall never do away with the deadly feuds which have been the curse of the people of the Frontier.' He could not ask the Pathans to forget the tribal law of retaliation and call, at the same time, for support to the war effort. If violence was not good in family and tribal feuds, how could violence be good in war, another name for feuds between nations? 'The Khudai Khidmatgars must, therefore, be what our name implies — servants of God and humanity — by laying down our lives and never taking any life.'¹⁰⁴

It was reported that on 7 July at Delhi, Sikandar Hayat Khan and Fazlul Haq (who were possibly discussing the chances of forming a central government with popular elements in it) met Maulana Azad, Gandhi, and other Congress leaders to talk informally on the Hindu-Muslim communal question. The next day, at Bombay, Jinnah said that the

premiers of the Punjab and Bengal, who were members of the Muslim League, had no authority to negotiate with the Congress leaders, or to come to any adjustment of differences, over the head of the Working Committee of the Muslim League. On 9 July, Jinnah made a statement, in the course of a press interview, that the Muslim League regarded the Congress demand of 7 July as a demand for the establishment of 'a Congress Raj' which the Muslim League would never accept. 'If their demand is met it will mean a Hindu majority government — a position which will never be accepted by Moslems.'¹⁰⁵ Referring to this statement, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who was willing to promote, in co-operation with all parties, the idea of a national government at this juncture, sent to Jinnah a telegram seeking clarification of the League's position: 'But is it the position of the League that he cannot agree to any provisional arrangement not based on two nation schemes?' In reply, Jinnah sent a telegram saying: 'Cannot reciprocate confidence', and added words of personal abuse implying that the Maulana was not a good Muslim. The Congress President maintained his accustomed dignity, but there were many protests against Jinnah's abusive telegram to Maulana Azad¹⁰⁶ which Jinnah gave to the press to publish. It was probably not unknown to Sikandar Hayat Khan and others that Jinnah was not unwilling to get into the Central Government when he met the viceroy on 28 June. A few days later, Jinnah asked the viceroy for a half share in the number of seats in the proposed Executive Council and War Council, if the Congress went into these Councils at any stage. Linlithgow did not accept the League's co-operation on such terms.¹⁰⁷ The Hindu Mahasabha president, V.D. Savarkar, would not agree to a national government formed from among the members of the Central Assembly. Commenting on the 'Delhi Offer' of the Congress Working Committee, Savarkar observed that the proposal to form a national government as an immediate step was less progressive than the Mahasabha's demand that India should be granted dominion status immediately after the cessation of hostilities.¹⁰⁸ Such status within the British Empire was acceptable for India, in the view of the Liberals, numerous like-minded non-party leaders, and distinguished public servants, also, holding independence as a desirable but remote possibility. The Liberals appealed to the leaders of all parties and communities to sink their differences and to set up national coalition governments at the Centre and in the provinces for the promotion of the war effort or the defence of India.

An article published in the *Harijan* on 21 July carried an indication of Gandhi's thinking on his future course of action:

Now that I am no longer in the Congress, I may not offer civil disobedience even in my own person in its name, but I am certainly free to offer civil

disobedience in my individual capacity whenever it may be necessary. No one need suppose that all civil disobedience will necessarily be taboo while the country is still being educated in *ahimsa* of the strong.

In their public statements in the days following the resolution of 7 July, Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal maintained that behind this resolution lay the previous decisions of the Working Committee as well as of the AICC since September 1939, and that the Ramgarh resolution demanding independence and a constituent assembly still stood. Azad and Jawaharlal, however, differed in one important respect in their explanation of the scope of co-operation with the British Government envisaged in making the Delhi Offer. 'When we passed the resolution every one of us was quite clear on this point that if India's demand is fulfilled it will be the duty of India to participate in the war', said Azad in the course of his statement on 11 July. On the same day, Rajagopalachari told a press correspondent: 'The war has lost its aggressive character. The defence of India is now an integral part of the defence of Britain.' This was the key, said Rajaji, to understanding the resolution of 7 July. Rajendra Prasad had said, on 9 July, that India could not give voluntary help in the successful prosecution of the war until the British Government declared India an independent country. On 16 July Jawaharlal wrote a letter to Maulana Azad protesting against statements which gave the public the impression that at Delhi every member of the Working Committee had in mind the same meaning of full support to the British war efforts: 'Indeed the words in the original draft [of the Resolution of 7 July] were changed from war efforts to the defence of the country at my instance.'¹⁰⁹

Though Congressmen and others were aware of the rift in the Working Committee, the members and other senior leaders strictly maintained their practice of not criticizing each other in public. 'Nobody should imagine that there is any split in the Congress Working Committee or that the Congress Working Committee is going to be separated from Mr Gandhi. Nothing can separate us.'¹¹⁰ These words of Sardar Patel in course of a speech at Ahmedabad on 19 July, reflected his anxiety to avoid a split in the Congress over the Delhi Offer and the problem of Gandhi's uncompromising advocacy of non-violent resistance to armed aggression.

Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan did not come to Poona for the All India Congress Committee meeting on 27 and 28 July. In his opening speech on 27 July, Maulana Azad informed the AICC that the Working Committee were divided on the issue of non-violence. Ghaffar Khan, Rajendra Prasad, Prafulla Ghosh, Acharya Kripalani and Shankarrao Deo felt they could go the whole length with Gandhiji in affirming the noble ideal of *ahimsa*, other members of the Committee felt

that the Congress was unequal to the task of extending non-violence to the field of defence of Free India against armed invasion. The president said:

Mahatma Gandhi has to give the message of non-violence to the world, and, therefore, it is his duty to propagate it but we have to consider our position as the representatives of the Indian Nation meeting in the National Congress. The Indian National Congress is a political organisation pledged to win the political independence of the country. It is not an institution for organising world peace.¹¹¹

Jawaharlal assured the AICC that the Wardha Resolution did not mean that the Congress were going to raise an army for war immediately. 'In the new conditions that will emerge out of the present chaos it will not be possible for us to say that we need not have an army and the Working Committee has only made our position on this question clear.' He could not think of an independent state in the existing world conditions depending on non-violence to meet any form of force.¹¹² From the trend of speeches at the AICC on 27 July, it was clear that the leaders would not split the Congress on a theoretical issue involving India after independence. At the end of the day, the AICC confirmed, by 91 votes in support and 63 votes against, the Working Committee's Wardha Statement of 21 June. Some members abstained from voting to indicate their conscientious objection or silent protest. Not many were happy with a step taking the Congress away from Gandhiji's position at this juncture.

The wisdom of the Delhi Offer of the Working Committee was debated in the AICC at Poona on the following day, 28 July. Jawaharlal made a moving appeal to Congressmen to maintain unity in their struggle for freedom under the Congress banner against British imperialism. He rebuked the Communists and other radicals who were always criticizing the Working Committee and others holding non-Communist and non-radical ideas.

I too know something about workers and peasants, and even today I can hold my own at a meeting of workers and peasants as against the whole Communist Party in India. They get lost in their dogmas and slogans, without bothering to know if these are suitable and have any relation to our country. The Communists always talk in terms of fight, fight against British imperialism, fight against Congress, fight against everybody round them.

He regarded himself as a socialist, but that did not mean that as a socialist he would do anything to make the Congress ineffective. 'I want the Congress to become as powerful an organisation as it could be. I want it to remain the same well-knit, united organisation as it has been.

I want the wise leadership of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, I want the great captaincy of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. I want the brilliant talents of Rajaji. I want every one of you, comrades, who are the leaders of your provinces and districts.' In explaining the Working Committee's Delhi Offer, Jawaharlal said:

The independence of India was the foundation of this resolution, and the way suggested for the immediate formation of a provisional national government, as a necessary prelude to the full national government which the people of India would form after a constituent assembly, was the only immediately feasible method. The difficulties in our way lay not in the resolution itself but in the possible implications of it, which might lead us astray. There was that risk and danger, but the situation demanded a lead and a definite course of action, for the sands of time were running out for Britain and for India.¹¹³

The debate in the AICC, on 28 July, was not brief. Several amendments were moved, but all were eventually withdrawn or defeated by an overwhelming majority. Pandit Jivanlal wanted the Working Committee to take the All India Committee into confidence as to what had happened at the Linlithgow-Gandhi meeting; he did not want the Congress to throw its full weight into the war effort. Maulana Nuruddin Behari wanted that the proposed national government or Cabinet at the Centre should have the confidence of the elected members of the Assembly. Captain Avadesh Singh proposed that the National Government should be representative of both British India and the Indian States. Swami Krishnanand's amendment required a provision that, if by 1 September 1940 the Delhi Offer was not accepted by the government, the Congress would launch civil disobedience. Shukhalal Saxena opposed the adoption of the resolution because it was already clear that the government had failed to accept the offer made by the Working Committee, Kedarnath Saigal, Mahesh Dutt, Ramakrishna Parihari, Damodar Menon, Mohammed Ali, Rajani Mukherji, Yusuf Meherally and Dr Ashraf opposed the resolution generally on the ground that collaboration with the British Government meant surrender to British imperialism. Mian Iftikaruddin opposed the resolution, urging that independence, and not compromise with the British Government, should be the fixed objective of the Congress. Acharya Narendra Deva said he was opposing the resolution out of his deep conviction that, at this crisis in the history of the organization, Congressmen should express their views frankly; like others he did not understand what had happened in June and early July to make the Working Committee change their attitude of struggle against British rule. To the criticisms of the Socialists, Communists, Royists and others who opposed or sought amendments to the Delhi Offer, Pattabhi Sitaramayya eloquently argued that the

Delhi resolution was no departure from either the Ramgarh resolution or the September 1939 statement of Congress policy, which did contemplate co-operation in the war in certain circumstances. It was vitally important for Congressmen to reconcile individual or group views for evolving a common formula of action. 'As long as the Mahatma was with them this was easy under his protection, supervision and patronage, but now they had to resolve their differences themselves.' The AICC was assured by Jawaharlal and Pattabhi that there was no mysterious negotiation for compromise with the British Government behind the scenes nor any premeditated connexion between the Wardha Statement and Gandhiji's meeting with the viceroy. Pattabhi said that, at the time of framing the Wardha Statement, Gandhiji himself had no idea that he was going to be called to Simla, 'So it was not as if the Wardha statement was a manoeuvre for the subsequent events.'

The clouds in the AICC at Poona on 28 July were really blown away by laughter raised by the polite wit of Rajagopalachari, the acknowledged father of the Delhi Offer. He noticed that the group representing the majority in the AICC did not speak, while those who were in opposition to the Working Committee, the Communists and the Socialists, made their opposition clear. These minority groups had enough scope in the AICC debate to give full expression to their views.

'What is it all these gentlemen want?' asked Mr Rajagopalachari. 'They feel that we of the Working Committee are no good and if we were to form a National Government we will not do what in their view is required. They also feel that only Socialists and Communists can do what is necessary for the country. I ask these gentlemen not to quarrel over dogmas and slogans but to learn from history and allow the present leaders, whom they do not regard as clever, to oust the British from power so that they can capture it from their not very clever leaders.' [Laughter]

Amidst continued laughter, Mr Rajagopalachari proceeded: 'I place this new technique before you. Why don't you consider this?' Rajaji went on to say that he agreed with Pandit Nehru that the Congress offer of co-operation could not hold the field indefinitely. The AICC adopted the resolution confirming the Delhi Offer by 95 votes to 47. In the voting, about 40 members, including Jawaharlal, Rajendra Prasad, Shankarrao Deo, Acharya Kripalani, and several of those members who opposed on the previous day the confirmation of the resolution of non-violence, remained neutral.¹¹⁴

In his concluding remarks on the debate in the AICC at Poona on 28 July, the Congress president assured the members that 'the present state of suspense will not be allowed to continue' and that in the past four months he had been thinking morning and evening of nothing

other than how to end this suspense. Soon after the Poona meeting, Maulana Azad was astonished and deeply hurt by a joint letter from all but four of his colleagues in the Working Committee informing him that they doubted whether they would continue to remain as members of the Committee because of their disagreement with the Congress president on the basic issue of India's participation in the War. They agreed with Gandhiji's view that India should not participate in the War. 'They had considered the matter deeply and in order not to embarrass me,' Maulana Azad later wrote in his memoirs, 'they were willing to continue as members of the Working Committee so long as the differences did not have any immediate application. If, however, the British Government accepted my terms [the Delhi-Poona Offer] and participation in the war became a live issue, they felt that they would have no option but to resign. They added that if I agreed to this, they would continue to serve as members of the Working Committee.' Jawaharlal, Rajagopalachari, Syed Mahmud, and Asaf Ali did not sign this letter to Azad, which practically buried the Delhi-Poona Offer of the Congress. The president immediately wrote to the signatories requesting them to remain in the Working Committee on their terms.¹¹⁵

8. A Case for Civil Disobedience

Fortunately for the unity of the Congress, the British Government produced in early August, in the form of a viceregal statement, an offer to the Indian people which every Congressman regarded as paltry and invidious. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad declined Lord Linlithgow's invitation to a meeting with him for discussion on the 'August Offer', without even the ceremony of consulting the Congress Working Committee first. The president informed the viceroy that his statement of 8 August did not provide to the Congress any basis of discussion; however, the Working Committee would meet shortly to finally decide on a reply to the viceroy's invitation to the Congress to join with him in the central government of India. 'Apart from other fundamental questions there is not even any suggestion for national government', Azad wrote to Linlithgow.¹¹⁶

The August Offer of 1940 which the British Government maintained as adequate and final till the spring of 1942, was made 'to the principal elements' in India's national life. 'It goes without saying that they [His Majesty's Government] could not contemplate the transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life. Nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into such a Government.' This constituted a clear 'No' to the Congress demand of independence and a 'national government' in the interim period, and a pledge to the Muslim League, the

princes, and others who might oppose the Congress demand. There would be no self-determined constitution by the Indian people; the British Government desired to help in constitution-making, by setting up 'after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representative of the principal elements in India's national life'. Further, with the least possible delay, India would be elevated to the status of a dominion. Meanwhile, in regard to the central government, the Act of 1919 would prevail. However, the governor general would be pleased to invite a certain number of 'representative' Indians, distinguished from nominated official Indians, to become members of his Executive Council to assist him in governing India. The Indian princes and various other interests in the country would be nominated to a War Advisory Council for the promotion of war effort in the Indian empire.¹¹⁷

'I am angry with it. I want you also to feel like it.' These words of Rajagopalachari uttered at a meeting at Ellore on 11 August expressed the Congress mind in regard to the viceregal statement of 8 August on British policy.¹¹⁸ It was 'thousands of miles removed from what the Congress thinks essential for India,' said Jawaharlal.¹¹⁹ Sardar Patel called the viceroy's statement a great blunder committed by those who should have known better.¹²⁰ In a statement to a British newspaper, Gandhi said: 'Britain cannot claim to stand for justice, if she fails to be just to India.' He expressed his fear that democracy was being wrecked.¹²¹

Gandhi was present at a six-hour session of the Congress Working Committee at Wardha, on 18 August. The Committee met for six days to discuss the plan of action in the coming weeks. The Committee's resolution, intimated to the Viceroy on 20 August and published on 22 August, said:

The proposals contained in the Viceroy's statement of August 8 last and the Secretary of State's speech in the House of Commons on August 14, are wholly opposed not only to the principle of democracy acclaimed by the British Government in their War aims, but are also opposed to the best interests of India, and, therefore the Congress cannot be a party to accepting these proposals or advising the country to accept them.

The British authority had been continually in operation, the Committee felt, so as to aggravate differences in India's national life to impede the evolution of a united independent India. For months past, the government had been picking up and arresting hundreds of public workers, including some of the best workers among Congressmen, under the Defence of India Rules, in an endeavour to undermine the Congress organization. The government were imposing a struggle on the Congress to vindicate its position and to act for the preservation of civil

liberties. 'The desire of the Congress not to embarrass the British Government, at a time of peril for them, has been misunderstood and despised.'

The attitude of the Congress turned from one of pronounced sympathy with the British people and willingness to co-operate on honourable terms to one of resentment and civil disobedience, in the days following the viceregal statement of August. In the course of an interview at Wardha on 26 August, Maulana Azad told the press that instructions had gone to the PCCs, including that of Assam, for organizing protest meetings to condemn the British policy and to explain Congress objections to the August Offer of the government.¹²² No such instructions were sent to the PCCs in the Punjab and Bengal, the two 'non-Congress provinces' in which the Congress feared disturbances and opposition from the provincial ministries headed by members of the Muslim League who had practically banned, under the Defence of India Rules, large assemblies, processions and anti-government propaganda. The AICC General Secretary sent a circular letter to the PCCs, on 28 August, to arrange for translation into regional languages and printing for wide distribution among the people the Working Committee's resolution of 22 August. The correspondence between the viceroy and the Congress president in August relating the British proposals was released on 29 August for publication. The main point of interest roused by this correspondence was the inability pleaded by Maulana Azad to meet the viceroy for discussion. This decision by Azad astonished some Congressmen and pleased others. Mahatma Gandhi regarded this decision as God-inspired; otherwise the Congress leaders could have been involved in negotiations relating to India's participation in or support to the war. Gandhi told Azad this privately.¹²³

Under the heading 'Time for Action', the *National Herald* of 29 August carried an article which was very nearly 'prejudicial' under the Defence of India Rules.¹²⁴ 'It has been the great folly of the successive British Governments that they have entirely ignored the political value of what Mr Churchill once called moral rearmament. The liberation of India by her own effort or by Britain would have an electrifying effect on world opinion, including the opinion of Englishmen.' As to the prospect of British victory in the war, it said: 'We are certain that if this is going to be a long war, England will not be able to win it without the co-operation of America, India and Russia.' Nationalist India had offered to Great Britain co-operation on terms honourable to both the parties. 'One year of talks, consultations, negotiations, speeches, and debates has ended, as it was bound to end, in a complete denial of freedom to India by Britain.' In reply to the cry of the loyalists and the moderates that nothing should be done to embarrass Britain and displease the British

statesmen like Churchill who might prove good 'givers', the *National Herald* replied: 'It is strange that the Congress should be asked in these circumstances to arrange the time-table of its fight for freedom to suit the convenience of the other party. It is not our fault that England has a major war on her hand, which is all the reason why, if her leaders had any sense of statesmanship and prudence left in them, they should have done their best to avoid.' Every Congressman knew that the *National Herald* was Jawaharlal's mouthpiece and sometimes carried his unsigned articles.

On 1 September appeared an article by Mahatma Gandhi in the *Harijan* saying:

It is not possible for a large and popular organisation like the Congress to be wholly non-violent for the simple reason that all its members cannot have attained the standard level of non-violence. But it is perfectly possible for some of its members who truly understand the implications of pure *ahimsa* and observe it as the law of their life, to lead a successful Satyagraha movement. This truth has even been demonstrated so far by the Congress.

Local Congress committees all over the country held meetings, as directed by the Congress General Secretary. The Information Bureau of the Government of India received in due course reports that the Congress 'big guns' were getting busy to prepare the field for civil disobedience.¹²⁵ On 8 September, from Allahabad, Jawaharlal Nehru sent V.K. Krishna Menon in London a cable saying: 'We had no expectations of Labour members who were following the imperialist line as before. Gandhiji is of the same opinion. He is attending the All-India meeting. The theoretical differences between him and the Working Committee regarding the future have been adjusted. Expect his leadership of the movement.' Vallabhbhai Patel was touring Gujarat where Congressmen hoped to enrol a lakh of new members this year, said an Intelligence Report. On 9 September, at Ahmedabad, Sardar Patel made a speech stating that the recent Government declarations constituted an attack on the very existence of the Indian National Congress. C. Rajagopalachari was touring in the Madras Presidency to feel the pulse of the country. Addressing the City Fourth Circle Political Conference (Madras) on 9 September, Rajagopalachari said that it was not wise to govern a large nation like India against its will. Pandit Dwaraka Prasad Misra in the Central Provinces and Pattabhi Sitaramayya in Masulipatam, Shankarrao Deo in Poona and B.G. Kher in Bombay made speeches severely criticizing British policy in India. Congressmen were saying that, all efforts for an honourable understanding with the government having proved futile, the time had come for launching a struggle and that non-Congress elements in the country had conspired to form an 'unholy

alliance in order to crush the Congress'. The Delhi-Poona resolution had lapsed; the Congress would revert and adhere to the Ramgarh decision calling for satyagraha under Gandhiji. In a public speech at Bombay, Bhulabhai Desai cut jokes about Great Britain's 'progress' in the war, and talked of a dark war of violence in Europe and the Indian situation calling for a non-violent war for Indian freedom.¹²⁶ B.G. Kher, the ex-Premier of Bombay, made a speech at Bombay, blaming the government for the political impasse:

A simple demand was made for setting up a National Government in the Centre during the transition period. Mr Rajagopalachari has gone a step further and said that he would obtain the approval of the Congress to the appointment of a Muslim League premier with power to form his own Cabinet if he agrees to be responsible to the Legislature. Has the British Government shown signs of agreeing to this? The question is one, whether they are willing to part with power, and their answer is an emphatic refusal.

'Under these circumstances what is the duty of a self-respecting body like the Congress? It can only be what the Congress Working Committee has adopted.' Such was the feeling among senior Congressmen on the eve of the AICC session at Bombay in mid-September 1940.¹²⁷

Accompanied by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Syed Mahmud, Mahatma Gandhi arrived in Bombay on 12 September and began informal discussions with Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru and other members of the Working Committee. Gandhi addressed the Working Committee on the 13th, and on the 15th. In opening the proceedings of the AICC, the Congress president announced that Gandhiji had agreed to take up once again the active leadership of the Congress in view of the political situation in the country. The formula of reconciliation between the strict Gandhians and the supporters of the Wardha Statement on the limitations of Congress non-violence was stated in the resolution on the political situation moved by Jawaharlal in the AICC on 15 September: 'This Committee firmly believes in the policy and practice of Non-violence, not only in the struggle for Swaraj, but also, in so far as this may be possible of application in a free India.' Further, it was declared that the state in free India would do its utmost to give effect to a policy of world disarmament and the nation would be prepared to give a lead to the world in disarmament. India would promote world peace, by contributing to the removal of causes of wars and national conflicts which were rooted in 'the domination of one country over another and the exploitation one people or group by another'. India would peacefully labour to that end, and her freedom would be the prelude to her close association with other free nations for peace and progress. These statements of the faith of Congressmen in

non-violence, disarmament, and a comity of free nations, were put in the concluding paragraphs of the Bombay resolution, to indicate formally, it seems, the ideas of international peace held generally by both the leftists and rightists who were now united in calling for civil disobedience in protest against the government's attitude towards the Congress.

The AICC members accepted as matter of course the declarations made in the Bombay resolution's first four paragraphs that the Delhi-Poona Offer had lapsed and was withdrawn, that the British Government by its do-nothing policy regarding independence and national government and by systematic arrests of Congress workers were imposing a struggle on the Indian National Congress, and that at this crisis the AICC requested Mahatma Gandhi to guide the Congress in action that should be taken. In the middle part of the resolution, in a paragraph expressing sympathy with the British people and recording the admiration of Congressmen for the bravery and endurance shown by the British nation in the face of peril, it was said that the spirit of satyagraha forbade the Congress from doing anything with a view to embarrass the British:

But this self-imposed restraint cannot be taken to the extent of self-extinction. The Congress must insist on the fullest freedom to pursue its policy, based on non-violence. The Congress has, however, no desire at the present moment to extend non-violent resistance, should this become necessary, beyond what is required for the preservation of the liberties of the people.¹²⁸

The clear indication in the Resolution that Gandhiji did not propose to embarrass the British Government inordinately did not seem good tactics to those who held that, if started at all after so many months of preparation since Ramgarh, civil disobedience should be launched in a big way. The Communists and Royists, at Ramgarh and after, were arguing that the country was not prepared in proper way by the Gandhians for the people to seize power, and that the Gandhians would help none but the fascist cause by launching a civil disobedience movement at this time when, in view of the world situation, anti-fascists in India needed unity. The strict Gandhians would abide by Gandhiji's decisions, but those who were Gandhians not by creed but by policy questioned his judgement on the point. How much of civil disobedience or embarrassment should be offered by Congressmen at this stage to break the political deadlock in India? The socialists in the AICC called for satyagraha on a scale bigger than what the Bombay resolution would justify, but they supported the resolution, because it contained, at long last, the prospect of launching a civil disobedience movement. Yusuf Meherally said that, on many occasions in the past, the Socialists had to

criticize Gandhian policy, but now that Gandhiji was for the struggle they supported him. But, as at Ramgarh, at the Bombay session there was a lingering suspicion about the ability of the mighty elders in the Working Committee to arouse themselves to action of the kind the socialists were contemplating. Ghulam Mohamed Jan of the North-West Frontier Province observed that he opposed the resolution because it was another attempt, like the one at Ramgarh, to evade the issue of satyagraha by the Congress. 'At Ramgarh the Working Committee promised a struggle but later at Wardha this policy was actually torpedoed and revised.'¹²⁹

Next to the formal resolution, the main events of the Bombay session of the AICC were the presence and addresses of Mahatma Gandhi on the 15th and 16th September. The tone of the Bombay resolution was one of calm confidence; it was set by Gandhi: 'You may be interested to know that the resolution before you has been drafted by me. Of course, Jawaharlal, the Congress draftsman has touched it up.' Gandhi talked of his conviction that the Congress must offer civil resistance; to offer such resistance in an organized non-violent satyagrahi manner, Congressmen must learn from the armed forces the rule of discipline, the secret of their power in cohesion; and to be effective in leadership he, their 'general', should be clear in his mind about the question: what was the struggle for? A mass party like the Congress could not act without repercussions affecting millions of people; people should know why he was asking Congressmen to undertake civil disobedience. 'This is not the time to ask for our independence' said Gandhi. 'Our demand is for freedom of speech but simply because the British people are engaged in a war for their very existence they cannot curtail our freedom of expression.' 'I cannot sit still when I see Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan in jail, than whom I do not know braver and straighter men. They have not preached violence but simply carried out the behests of the Ramgarh resolution. It was a point of honour with them.' 'If we do not take care the Congress will disappear, and if the Congress disappears the national spirit disappears.' 'It is not Satyagraha to watch people being taken away.'

Gandhiji declared that he would fight with the material at his disposal; it was not his fault that, after all these years of work, Congressmen were not ready for mass satyagraha in the truly non-violent spirit of resistance to evil and repression. 'We are going to fight the empire which believes in violence. If we give up non-violence and resort to violence we will perish.' Gandhiji ruled out mass civil disobedience; he could approve of non-mass or individual satyagraha, but did not choose to elaborate the tactics of it. 'The key to civil disobedience, no-tax campaign, etc., is in my and not your hands. You should not break law till I have settled with the Viceroy.'¹³⁰

With only seven votes in dissent in a house of 192, the AICC passed on 16 September the official resolution on the political situation. It was known that, on the following day, Gandhi had written to the viceroy seeking a meeting with him. On 18 September, the Working Committee meeting at Bombay adopted a resolution calling upon all Congress organizations to stop all civil disobedience, individual or other, pending definite instructions from Mahatma Gandhi. He regarded this suspension as indispensable for his impending interview with the viceroy, 'and also as a short course of obedience to law'.¹³¹ Though not mentioned in this resolution, it had relevance to the situation created by cases of Congress volunteers courting arrest in the United Provinces in protest against the government's ordinance of early August banning the wearing of uniforms and military type drill. Further, there was news that in Kerala Congressmen were defying the order of the local authorities prohibiting meetings, processions and assemblies in connection with the 'Protest-Day' programme of the Congress. A grave law and order situation was reported from Cannanore where, on 15 September, a sub-inspector of police was stoned to death and another policeman mortally injured by an infuriated mob at a Peasants' Special Conference held in Moraya near 'Kalliasseri. In Tellicherry, the police resorted to firing, resulting in two deaths. On 17 September, in Calicut, Manjunatha Rao, Treasurer, Kerala Provincial Congress Committee, A. Damodaran, President, Calicut Town Congress Committee and 17 Congress volunteers, were arrested for defying the district magistrate's prohibitory orders. These reports led the Working Committee to pass a resolution on the Kerala Congress Committee setting up an enquiry committee consisting of Dr P. Subbaroyan and R.K.L. Nandkeolyar to report on complaints of indiscipline and recent disturbances.¹³² The Kerala incidents seemed to confirm Mahatma Gandhi's estimate that the country was not ready for a non-violent mass movement. He had already made up his mind, in April 1940, to maintain a distinction between the pledged and registered active satyagrahis and the passive satyagrahis among Congressmen. At Bombay on 15 September he issued a statement declaring that he would neither invite nor encourage students to participate in the proposed satyagraha campaign. 'To withdraw students from schools and colleges is to encourage them in the programme of non-cooperation. It is not our programme today.'¹³³ The Congress general secretary issued from Bombay on 20 September a circular letter to the PCCs advising them not to announce any 'all provincial day' or processions or hartal, while organizing publicity for the recent Congress resolutions. 'In no case must the explanation of the resolutions should be made an occasion to develop into anti-recruitment and anti-war contribution propaganda.'¹³⁴ On the same day, the Congress president stated to the press that the captain of the satyagraha,

Mahatma Gandhi, was the authority to decide what steps would be desirable in this campaign, but the directive for all civil disobedience by Congressmen was likely to be withdrawn in a few days.

In a special message to the British people which he delivered on 19 September through a London newspaper, Gandhi said that freedom of speech and the corresponding action being the breath of democratic life, it was wrong to curtail this freedom so long as it did not promote violence in any shape or form. This was one fact which Britain could easily recognize and yield to India. He was unprepared for the recent declarations of British policy. 'If the premises on which the Congress case is built were wrong there is no case for Civil Disobedience,' said Gandhi, in the course of a statement made at Wardha on 20 September; he did not propose to go to Simla to hold 'a pistol' to the viceroy's head.¹³⁵ After his meeting with Gandhi on 27 September at Simla, Linlithgow felt depressed and telegraphed to Amery saying, 'He is bent on mischief.'¹³⁶ Gandhi asked for freedom to undertake non-violent propaganda against all wars, including the current war involving India. On 30 September, Linlithgow summed up his position in a letter to Gandhi referring to the talk they had earlier that day: 'It would clearly not be possible, in the interests of India herself, more particularly at this critical juncture of the war, to acquiesce in interference with the war effort which would be involved in freedom of speech so wide as that for which you have asked.' Gandhi, too, claimed to speak in the interests of India. He left Simla on the same day after sending a reply to the Viceroy: 'If the Congress has to die it should do so in the act of proclaiming its faith.'¹³⁷

Gandhi returned from Simla with added strength for himself, having satisfied a condition of satyagraha, viz., that before offering it a satyagrahi should fully understand the position of the opposing party and explain his own. For him, no satyagraha was inevitable till it was actually launched, harmony not conflict being the ideal of Gandhian satyagraha, of which civil disobedience was only an occasional act of courage required for a good cause.

Notes and References

1. See, Jawaharlal to V.K. Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad, 2 March, 1940, in S. Gopal (genl. ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (abbrev. in following notes: SWJN), (New Delhi, 1977), X, pp. 343-6.
2. Nripendranath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register* (abbrev. in the following notes: IAR (Calcutta), 1939, II, p.250.
3. 'I was its author,' said Gandhi about the Pledge of 1930, which appeared rather discursive to him also in 1940. About the Pledge of 1940, Gandhi said, 'The pledge is surely not exhaustive. It represents the limit to

which I could carry the Working Committee with me.' The *mantra* (holy word) of swaraj was given to nationalists when Lokamanya Tilak first uttered 'Swaraj is my birthright'; this *mantra* was made a part of the Congress mind by the Congress Pledge of 1930. In December 1939, Gandhi began to prepare himself and the Congress for a civil disobedience movement in assertion of India's moral right to complete independence. 'Since the Congress is pledged to non-violence, the final sanction behind it is Civil Resistance, which is but a part of Satyagraha,' said the CWC, in its statement on the Political Situation adopted at Wardha, 18-22 December 1939. The CWC expressed a hope that all Congress organizations would, by a vigorous prosecution of the Congress constructive programme, 'prove themselves fit to take up the call when it comes' for civil resistance. For Gandhi's arguments defending the Pledge of 1940, see his article 'Dissentients', quoted in extenso in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (New ed. rev., March 1962), V (1938-40), pp.222-8.

4. 'The political significance that is being given to spinning now and the manner in which it has been quietly converted by the Congress "high command" into a method of political struggle need unequivocal condemnation, consequently, members of the Forward Bloc would be perfectly justified in organizing separate meetings and demonstrations on "Independence Day". "See the above in *IAR*, 1940, I, p.30, under 15 January 1940, Subhas Bose's statement to the press at Patna. For Gandhi's reply to criticisms, particularly those of Jayaprakash Narayan and Sampurnananda, see Gandhi's article 'Dissentients' quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp.222-8. Jayaprakash said that the Congress Socialists had never accepted the view that the constructive programme was the only or even an adequately effective weapon in the national struggle, and that they had advanced a new programme, that of labour and peasant organization, as the proper foundation of a revolutionary mass movement against British imperialism. Sampurnananda observed that the Congress Socialists could not accept the new Independence Day Pledge, if it meant definitely committing Congress to a policy of village industries as opposed to mass production. Rammanohar Lohia said that the new Pledge did not necessitate belief in a social order based exclusively on the village industries and the current constructive programme of the party. 'On the whole, I can say, I have no difficulty in accepting Dr Lohia's interpretation,' said Gandhi. In his vision of free India, there was plenty of room for industrialization to exist side by side with village industries and traditional crafts providing gainful occupation and cultural sustenance to many millions of people. 'In the state of the future, it [machine industry] will subserve the village and their crafts.'

In the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, the present home of the AICC archives, see AICC, G-25/1940, pp.367-71, for an extract from a letter or draft statement of no date from Jayaprakash Narayan enumerating points of a new order which the Congress Socialists envisaged. These included law of the land based on the will of the people freely expressed, guarantee of equal rights, full individual and

civil liberty and cultural and religious freedom, social justice and economic freedom in state organization, protection of the poor and down-trodden, the abolition of landlordism and farm bondage, self-governing and self-sufficient villages, the promotion of small-scale or co-operative production, nationalization of heavy transport, shipping, mining and heavy industries, the abolition of the princely states of India, a world based on the co-operative goodwill of nations and men, total rejection of armaments, and peace between nations. The Congress Socialists envisaged democratically organized and socially controlled industries in a democratically organized State in Free India. See Asoka Mehta, 'Oligarchs of Our Industries', the *Modern Review* (Calcutta), October 1940, pp.411-6.

5. In AICC, C-1/1940, pp.47-51, the United Provinces PCC, Circular No.140 to the DCCs, City, and Town Congress Committees, dt. Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, 15 January 1940, sd. Jawaharlal Nehru, President. The text is the same, but dated differently (Lucknow, 16 January 1940), in *SWJN*, X, pp.489-91.
6. For the prescribed procedure of pledge taking in meetings of 26 January 1940, see Congress President Rajendra Prasad's and Congress General Secretary Acharya J.B. Kripalani's instructions, in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp.217-9, and p.31. See Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp.228-9, for Gandhi's instructions issued on the eve of Independence Day. Jayaprakash had proposed that students and workers should strike on 26 January; Gandhi asked them not to do so. As for this personal programme at Sevagram, Gandhi announced a fast for one day, beginning in the evening of 25 January; those who believed in fasts for self-purification preparatory to high endeavour were invited to do likewise.
7. AICC, G-5, Pt.4, p.1.
8. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, p.32, under 22 January, Subhas Bose's statement to the press, at Lucknow, on the 'Gandhian Pledge'. At Calcutta, on 26 January, the Bengal PCC organized a meeting in which the charkha clause of the pledge of 1940 was eliminated in pledge-taking. See Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, p.229.
9. See in AICC, G2/1940, pp.145-55. The pleasantries about Jawaharlal being an one-man party of importance was inserted by Acharya Kripalani after the manuscript was typed for posting to six newspapers, at the end of January 1940.
10. In *INR*, 1940 I, pp.261-85, see AICC Genl. Secy.'s Annual Report, March 1939-Feb. 1940; this report included summaries of reform proposals made by the Reform Committee and consequent constitutional amendments in 1939. It was important in 1938-39 to emphasize that for many of its members and sympathizers, the Congress was much more than an election organization of vast size. S.Srinivasa Iyengar wrote the following words of wisdom in 1939: 'If you want the Congress organisations [committees] to function for Swaraj, they should not be mere election organisations. If they have Swaraj work, I am perfectly certain the automatic reform of the Congress organisations will follow, and there will be greater happiness in the country.' See extract from his article in

- the *Indian World*, and in the *Modern Review* (Calcutta), April 1939, pp.477-8.
11. See, Resolutions of the CWC at Wardha, 19 to 21 January 1940; in *IAR*, I, 1940, pp.214-7. On 20 and 21 January, the committee heard at great length the arguments of the Bengal PCC, presented by Sarat Chandra Bose, regarding the resolution of the PCC dated 6 January relating to Congress elections in Bengal. There was controversy over the accounts of the Bengal PCC also. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, under Chronicle of Events in January, in pp. 25-34. The AICC, Genl. Secy's Annual report, March 1939-February 1940 contained a long account of the challenge to the authority of the CWC and party discipline posed by the Bengal PCC's proceedings; see, in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp.266-7, 275-9. Some people described the 'Bengal Dispute' as a 'Revolt of the Bengal PCC'. A feeling of humiliation was probably common among elderly Congressmen at this split in the Bengal PCC and many hard words were said and motives alleged by Congressmen of contrary views. On 18 February 1940, from Jessore, Dr K. Dhar wrote to his friend, J.B. Kripalani: 'We are feeling very much humiliated at the un-edifying antics of Bengal's non-official Rashtrapati and his brother. The political life of Bengal has degenerated into personal villification under the inspiring leadership of Bose brothers. We are waiting to see the end of this madness in near future.' See in AICC, G-2/1939-40, p.73.
 12. For the CWC resolutions, Sadaqat Ashram, Patna, 28 Feb.-1 March 1940, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp.235-6; also p.44, for Subhas Bose's comment.
 13. For Munshi's note on his interview on 12 January 1940 with Linlithgow, see K.M. Munshi, *Indian Constitutional Documents*, Vol. I: *Pilgrimage to Freedom (1902-1950)* 1st ed. (Bombay, 1967), Appendix No.144. Linlithgow received Bhulabhai Desai for a talk on 13 January. Bhulabhai, Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari, and Sardar Patel met Gandhiji at Wardha on 15 January. On 18 January, in his inaugural address at the eighth annual session of the Raipur District Political Conference, Sardar Patel declared: 'We want that Britain should win the war. But India must secure the right to self-determination.' A day earlier, on 17 January, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, in the course of his presidential speech at the Banaras District Political Conference at Chandauli, said that efforts were being made to bring about a compromise between the British Government and the Congress. It was generally held by Congressmen and others that Linlithgow's Orient Club speech was an advance on recent authoritative pronouncements on Indian affairs made by the British Government. In *IAR*, 1940, I, see pp.29-31.
 14. 'I like the latest pronouncement of Lord Linlithgow,' wrote Gandhi in an article, 'The Dissentients', in the *Harijan* (20 January). Further, he saw in Linlithgow's Orient Club speech 'the germs of a settlement honourable to both nations'. 'Whatever may be true of the members of the Working Committee, I wholly endorse Mr Subhas Bose's charge that I am eager to have a compromise with Britain if it can be had with honour.' At New Delhi, in course of his interview with Linlithgow on 5 February, Gandhi found that the British Government offered to India the following pro-

posals: (1) Dominion status for a unified India at the earliest opportunity; (2) for the interim period, four seats in the Governor General's Council to the political parties; (3) renewed efforts by the government to introduce the federation plan under the Act of 1935. Explaining the Congress view, Gandhi pointed out (1) that India must choose her own status, (2) that Indian minorities were India's business, and (3) that a referendum of States' peoples must decide the future of the princely states. For a summary of the Linlithgow-Gandhi talk on 5 February 1940, see John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay: Lord Linlithgow in India 1936-1943* (London, 1971), pp. 162-3. For Gandhi's statement made at Delhi on 6 February 1940, see *IAR*, 1940, I, p.38. Also, Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp.231-3, for a full account. Gandhi paused only 'once, to correct his words, while dictating this fairly long statement to the representatives of the *Manchester Guardian*, the *News Chronicle*, and *The Times*.

15. For Sardar Patel's statement, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, p.42, under 23 February. Linlithgow practically asked for unconditional support in the war effort, in his talk with Gandhi on 4 September 1939; in return he promised to keep, in regard to India's future, an open mind as far as a governor general's constitutional position allowed him. Personally, Gandhi was content with this. 'The Viceroy's information was that Gandhi held fast to the view which he had expressed to him and that he urged the Working Committee to offer unconditional co-operation. But the Committee was less far-sighted than Gandhi.' Linlithgow interviewed Jinnah, too, on 4 September 1939; Jinnah wanted something positive to take back to his supporters. See in Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, pp.136-8. Sardar Patel's remark on the options before the Congress, unconditional support or conditional support in the war effort of Britain in a British war against Nazi imperialism, was hardly strange, under the circumstances.
16. For words from Rajaji's speech at the Madras Christian College, 25 January 1940, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, p.33, and *SWJN*, X, p.322, fn.3. Bhulabhai is quoted in *IAR*, 1940, I, p.37.
17. In *SWJN*, X, see pp.308-10 for the text of Jawaharlal's speech at Nagpur on 22 January 1940; pp.312-4, for his speech at Allahabad on 24 January; pp.322-3, for his statement at the press conference, Bombay, 10 February. In Linlithgow's appreciation, Nehru was going to be 'the chief nuisance' in the matter of negotiation between the British Government and the Right Wing Congress. 'Gandhi having, with whatever hesitations as to the soundness of Nehru's policy handed his mantle to Nehru, no doubt feels bound to go a very long way in supporting and advocating policies commended by Nehru which would never have commended themselves to the old man himself had he still been in sole and effective charge,' wrote Linlithgow. In Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal, whom he interviewed individually on 30 September 1939, Linlithgow found 'a sad decline from the standard of the Mahatma'. Rajendra Prasad appeared reluctant to face 'realities'; Jawaharlal appeared to be a 'doctrinaire'. The viceroy's intuition was favourable towards Sardar Patel whom he saw next (30 September 1940); he 'took to Patel', probably because, among other things, the Sardar told the Viceroy that the

- matter of settlement between the British Government and the Congress really lay between Linlithgow and Gandhi. See, Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, pp.146-50.
18. For the text of Jawaharlal's letter to Gandhi, 24 October 1940, see in *SWJN*, X, p.310-12.
 19. In *SWJN*, X, pp. 319-22, see Jawaharlal's letter to Gandhi, 4 February 1940.
 20. For Jawaharlal's Note on Congress Policy, written at Wardha, 20 January 1940, see in *SWJN*, X, pp. 303-8. This confidential note explains more fully, point by point, than any other document, the CWC's reasons for insisting on no status less than complete independence for India in 1940 and after.
 21. 'We in India stand for the fullest independence. There is no common ground, no meeting place between the two [the British Empire and nationalist India as represented by the Congress], at present at least and in the near future,' said Jawaharlal to the United Provinces PCC, in explaining the resolution adopted by the PCC on 16 February 1940. For the resolution and Jawaharlal's speech at Lucknow on that date, see *SWJN*, X, pp. 326-7, 327-8.
 22. 'There must be a finality about this', wrote Jawaharlal to Maulana Azad, regarding the Congress position of no compromise on the point of complete independence for India. Further, Jawaharlal would not agree to a constituent assembly consisting of members of the existing legislatures; and he would not renounce the four-year-old basic demand for the introduction of adult franchise. See in *SWJN*, X, pp. 330-4.
 23. See *SWJN*, X, pp. 335-6. There was a proposal for inviting to the Ramgarh Congress some observers from England. It was not accepted by the Congress President, Rajendra Prasad, who was Chairman of the Reception Committee for the Ramgarh Congress.
 24. In S. Qaim Hussain Jafri, ed., *Congress Leaders' Correspondence with Quaid-i-Azam* (Lahore, Pakistan, n.d.), See pp. 42-3, for Gandhi's letter, dt. 16 January 1940; and pp 46-9, for Jinnah's reply to Gandhi, dt. Bombay, 21 January. Jinnah did not spare Gandhi for being innovative in the matter of addressing him: for a time, 'Jinab Jinnah Sahib', till recently 'you addressed me as "Mr." then quite recently as "Shree" in between as "friend".' 'What is in a prefix after all, a rose called by any other name smells just as sweet,' Jinnah wrote to 'Dear Mr. Gandhi'.
 25. In *IAR*, 1940, I, in pp. 36 see B.S. Moonje's words at Jamshedpur on 1 February; in p. 42, extract from his Presidential Address at the Lucknow Hindu Youth conference, 3 March 1940.
 26. In *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 38, 46-7 (S. Satyamurti's statement, 3 March, supporting Sardar Patel's suggestion, backed by the Aga Khan, that the provincial legislatures and their electorate through the provincial ministers could serve as a constituent assembly).
 27. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 40.
 28. For Jawaharlal's appreciation of Sikandar Hayat Khan and Fazlul Haq in early 1940, see *SWJN*, X, pp. 433-6.
 29. In *IAR*, 1940.

30. In *SWJN*, X, see pp. 433-6, Jawaharlal to V.K. Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad, 3 March 1940.
31. In *SWJN*, X, pp. 337-8, Jawaharlal to V.K. Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad, 27 February 1940.
32. See in Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom: An Autobiographical Narrative* (Bombay, 1959), p. 24. Azad had withdrawn from the Congress presidential election in January 1939. Two months later, at the annual Congress session held at Tripuri, because of the illness of President Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Azad, being the seniormost ex-president present, presided over some of the Subjects Committee meetings and at the open session of the Congress. 'So it was as if Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had not withdrawn his candidature for the presidency and had been elected president,' said the *Modern Review* (Calcutta), April 1939, pp. 374-5. 'It is well known that for some years past the Congress Presidency has been his, if he would but agree to accept it,' said Jawaharlal at Allahabad, 27 February 1940, in a statement replying to a remark by the *Manchester Guardian* representing Azad's election to presidency as arranged because he was a Muslim. Maulana Azad represented eminently the tradition and viewpoint of the right wing in the Indian National Congress. A leftist candidate did not have much chance to win the Congress presidency, as Subhas Bose predicted in January 1940 at a press conference in Bombay. M.N. Roy said in a press statement issued from Calcutta on 9 February: 'For me the contest is not against any individual, but between two sets of ideas and ideals.' The votes polled by Maulana Azad and M.N. Roy in the Congress provinces were as follows:

	<i>Maulana Azad</i>	<i>M.N. Roy</i>
Ajmer	3	Nil
Andhra	173	15
Assam	45	3
Bengal	—	—
Bihar	239	19
Bombay	19	1
Delhi	—	—
Gujarat	111	1
Karnatak	92	19
Kerala	86	1
Mahakoshal	97	1
Maharashtra	127	17
Nagpur	21	4
NWFP	48	2
Punjab	188	23
Sind	20	2
Tamil Nadu	178	9
UP	272	49
Utkal	119	4
Vidarbha	26	5
TOTAL...	1864	183

The election could not be completed in time in Bengal and Delhi. See *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 29, 39, 40, 220.

33. Maulana Azad refused to accept the leadership of the Bengal Congress to fill the gap, after the death of C.R. Das. It was said Maulana Azad rejected 'the Triple Crown': the Mayorship of Calcutta, Presidentship of the Bengal PCC, and Leadership of the Bengal Legislative Council, to devote his time to writing a commentary on the Holy Quran. He continued to be in politics because of a sense of duty of a lofty kind. 'In a way he is the link between the old and the new forces that are continually struggling for mastery in the Congress and it is no mean tribute to his abilities that his advice is sought by two such completely different leaders of modern India as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal.' Azad was 'the most radical among the old guard of politicians', said Yusuf Meherally, in his *Leaders of India*, Vol. I (sixth ed. Bombay, 1946), pp. 14-7, a work first published in 1940. See also Joachim Alva, *Men and Supermen of Hindustan* (Bombay, 1943), p. 50, where he explains the reasons for the respect in which Maulana Azad and two other famed nationalist Muslims, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr M.A. Ansari, were held by all Congressmen, young and old. Those three were 'nature's few gentlemen' in Indian politics, in a period when gentlemen were plentiful and the politics of good manners prevailed.
34. 'This resolution is fundamentally Gandhiji's, except for the language here and there. From this you can understand somewhat how Gandhiji's mind is working. In view of what the British Government stands for, there is not a shadow of a chance of any agreement.' Jawaharlal to V.K. Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad, 2 March 1940; in *SWJN*, X, p. 343. For the Patna Resolution of the CWC and the Ramgarh Resolution of the AICC, which were practically the same, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 235-6, 228-9. In his presidential speech at the Anti-compromise Conference on 19 March 1940, at Kisannagar not far from the Ramgarh Congress Nagar, Subhas Chandra Bose, declared 'our leaders are wobbling and vacillation has demoralized a section of the Left as well'. Gandhi had said, on 2 March that if anybody had closed the door of negotiation it was Zetland, the Secretary of State, and that 'The Congress will not rest till India is a free country as Britain is.' Gandhi's own style was neither to rest nor to hurry indecently, in doing things. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, 52, and in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, p. 252.
35. For the proceedings of the Subject Committee, the open session, and the AICC, March 17 to March 20, 1940, see Report from the United Press of India, official reporters to the Congress, in AICC, C-26 (pt. III, IV) /1942, pp. 493-599. In A.M. Zaidi and S.G. Zaidi (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress* (New Delhi, 1981), XII, pp. 299-303, for the first day (17 March), and for the second day (18 March), Subjects Committee debates, in which the leftists were split in their attitude to the official resolution, with the Royists and Communists opposing the call for satyagraha and the Congress Socialists supporting the call. The Royists proposed preparation for 'local struggles' under the guidance of Peoples' Councils for local grievances, a step towards the development of

'the will for political power' among the masses, through which will rise 'the collective creation', the constituent assembly for free India. The Communists desired immediate launching of 'nation-wide mass civil disobedience in British India as well as in the Indian States'. The Congress Socialists desired a mass movement, but they would abide by the official resolution which envisaged a struggle under Gandhiji's supreme command. Among those who welcomed Gandhi's assumption of leadership in civil disobedience once again, Professor N.G. Ranga, told the Subjects Committee: 'We should be preparing ourselves for civil disobedience in the same manner as it was done in 1931 or 1932.' K. Santhanam called for non-cooperation first, urging that in non-cooperation the question of preparedness did not arise. He proposed the following steps to civil disobedience: (1) mass economic non-cooperation in regard to war funds, (2) a programme of decreasing by consumer effort the Government's receipts from the railway, postal service, customs and other items of revenue in the central budget, and (3) boycott of British goods, and some such programme as the nationalists could take up immediately. 'As time goes on we will take more and more steps,' said Santhanam. Sardar Gopal Singh Quami moved an amendment to the effect that the AICC be asked to start civil disobedience, a proposal less radical than Sris Chandra Chatterjee's demand: 'In the meantime [while a sub-committee outlined a constitution], we should declare independence and go ahead.' Gopal Singh had something to say about Gandhiji: 'A section of the audience was amused and Mahatma Gandhi was an interested spectator as he went on criticising Mahatma Gandhi for not launching any struggle on the ground that the country was not prepared or that communal harmony had not been established. He said leaders and the people both were prepared for the struggle. If anybody was not prepared it was Gandhiji himself. Since Gandhiji was not prepared, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other ardent votaries and followers were not prepared. That seemed to be the logic of the whole argument. 'Maulvi Abdul Ghani wished to know what preparations for civil disobedience had been made and how many civil resisters Gopal Singh Quami had enlisted in the Punjab that he was insistent on launching a struggle at once. Sardar Pratap Singh submitted: 'Let us delegate our powers to Gandhiji.'

36. For Maulana Azad's words 'rain blood' etc., see pp. 589-92, in AICC, G-26 (Pts, III & IV)/1942. Because of foul weather, Ramgarh was the briefest annual open session of the AICC till then. In spectacle, a point of no small significance, in publicity and in local organizers' pride, the Ramgarh Congress provided nothing comparable to the splendid procession of 52 richly caparisoned elephants at Tripuri in 1939 where a tusker, carrying the Congress tricolour aloft on its howdah, led 51 elephants carrying large-sized pictures of 51 past presidents, while an elephant-drawn chariot came behind carrying a picture of Subhas Chandra Bose, the 52nd President. In 1940, Ramgarh, however, provided to the AICC and many thousands of visitors, something Tripuri and several other

Congresses did not provide: the *darshan* (the holy sight) and the spoken words of the Mahatmaji. This was the first occasion, since his retirement from the Congress in 1934 that Gandhi addressed an AICC meeting. Nearly 20,000 people were present in the Subjects Committee pandal at about ten in the night of 18 March, when Gandhi spoke. He called for preparedness for a non-violent movement, without defining its scope, manner and time; the constructive work programme for Congressmen was the way of preparing for civil resistance in the true satyagraha spirit, the non-violence of the morally strong, he said.

37. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 286-90, the text of Rajendra Prasad's welcome speech at the Plenary Session, Ramgarh, 19 March 1940.
38. For an English translation of Azad's Presidential Address of 1940, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 290-300. Jawaharlal carefully edited the translation made by someone else. The original, written entirely by Maulana Azad, was in Urdu, a masterpiece of prose in that urbane language of Muslims. See in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 203-5, Jawaharlal's letter to V.K. Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad, 14 March 1940.
39. For an English translation of Gandhi's speech in Hindustani at the Plenary Session, 20 March 1940, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 230-1. At Ramgarh, the names of the members of the new CWC under Maulana Azad were announced on 20 March. These were: Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Bhulabhai Desai, Jamnalal Bajaj, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, P.C. Ghosh, Dr Syed Mahmud, Asaf Ali, C. Rajagopalachari, and Acharya Kripalani. Syed Mahmud, Asaf Ali and Rajagopalachari were new members. Acharya Kripalani remained as the General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee.
40. In *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 237-8, see AICC, Genl. Secy's. Circular No. 1, dated Allahabad, 23 March 1940; No. 2, dated 23 March 1940; No. 3, dated 25 March 1940. Every year since 1919, Congressmen observed National Week. On 6 April 1919, 'the masses found their feet' in the national movement with the inauguration of the Gandhian civil disobedience under the Congress flag. On 13 April 1919, occurred the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which largely undermined the British reputation for honourable conduct. In April 1940, the National Week celebrations (*prabhat pheries*, flag-hoisting, processions and meetings, visits to Harijan colonies, spinning demonstrations, khadi and village industries exhibitions, arranged by Congress committees in their respective areas) derived a special significance because they followed the Ramgarh session of the Congress by only about two weeks. Gandhi had announced his unwillingness to lead a civil disobedience movement unless Congressmen took the Constructive Programme seriously as preparatory discipline and national service. See *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 242-3, President Azad's statement in connection with National Week in 1940.
41. For the form of the Satyagraha Pledge of 1940, see Circular No. 4, dt. 29 March, issued by the Genl. Secy., AICC, in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 238-40. The distinction between 'Active Satyagrahis' and 'Passive Satyagrahis' was demanded by Gandhiji as part of his civil resistance programme or tactics in 1940-1. Kripalani admitted that the term 'passive satyagrahi'

was rather vague, but it was essential to distinguish between those who would sign the satyagraha pledge and those who would not sign the pledge but supported the satyagraha movement. 'Active Satyagrahis are those who in addition to carrying out the constructive programme of the Congress are prepared to when called upon to join the civil disobedience movement and are prepared as a consequence to go to jail. Passive satyagrahis are those who believe in the creed and object of the Congress and are active sympathisers, but who do not propose to join in the civil disobedience movement and go to jail.' Further: 'It would also be the duty of the passive satyagrahis not to foment Kisan or Labour troubles at a time when the Congress has started civil disobedience.' See Kripalani to Rajkumar Chakhravarty, dt. 4 May 1940; in AICC, G-4/1940, pp. 77-9.

Could Forward Blocists, Socialists, and Communists sign the Satyagraha Pledge? Regarding Forward Bloc members, Kripalani wrote: 'They are pledged to immediate satyagraha irrespective of the decision of the Working Committee. They cannot, therefore, pledge themselves to carry out the instructions of the Congress or any body authorised to issue instructions by the Congress. They cannot be asked to sign the pledge and if they propose to sign the pledge it must be impressed upon them that the first condition of the signing of the pledge is to resign their membership of the Forward Bloc.' As far as the socialists are concerned it is quite possible that they may sign the pledge genuinely. No restriction must be placed to their signing and becoming satyagrahis.' The Communists were not to be enlisted as satyagrahis. 'Of course there is no communist party as such openly organized. But we know that an individual communist does not exist in the air.' 'I am clearly of the opinion that a communist is precluded from signing the pledge by the extreme nature of the views he holds about Satyagraha, truth and non-violence.' Kripalani thought some Communists would creep into the movement and be signing the Satyagraha Pledge for their own purpose. 'This cannot be helped.' See, Kripalani's letter to Purnimaji (Purnima Bannerjee of Allahabad?) dt. 8 May 1940; in AICC, G-4/1940, pp. 45-7.

42. In *IAR*, 1940, I, see pp. 238-2.

43. In *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 243-4, see CWC Resolutions, Wardha, 15-19 April 1940. Also, Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 265-6. On 25 April 1940, M.N. Roy issued a circular letter instructing his followers not to sign the Satyagraha Pledge and not to resign membership of any Congress Committee. See in AICC, G-3/1940, p. 82, Sadiq Ali to Kripalani, dt. 26 April 1940, saying 'The intention of the Working Committee's resolution is perfectly clear, but it seems some good friends will stick on and not resign.' For the objections of the Royists to the Satyagraha Pledge and Gandhi's instructions, see in AICC, G-4/1940, pp. 69-70, letter from B.V. Marathe, member, D Ward, DCC, Bombay, dt. 22 April 1940, saying 'Gandhian Way is a blind alley.'

44. The PCCs were instructed to set up departments of Publicity, Charkha, Minority, and Harijan, and to provide these with funds. Under neces-

sary safeguards, a department could be permitted to raise money for its activities. See AICC Genl. Secy's. Circular No. 4, dt. 29 March 1940; in IAR, 1940, I, pp. 238-9. The AICC office, at Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, opened some time later in 1940 a Women's Department headed by Sucheta Kripalani. Acharya Kripalani assured Maulana Azad, in a letter of 13 May 1940, that Sucheta Devi would take up the work from 15 May. See in AICC, G-2/1940, p. 301.

45. See in IAR, 1940, I, pp. 238-9, 244. In AICC, G-25/1940, p. 115, see Circular to the PCCs, No.6, dt. 10 April 1940, asking them to organize, 'a meeting, a village', to conduct propaganda on Congress policies and the programme of satyagraha.
46. See in AICC, G-28 (Pt.2)/1940, p. 67, statement of PCC staff and salaries. Number of persons, total for all PCCs in June 1940, was 197; and total of monthly salary paid to these persons amounted to Rs 6,503.
47. In May-June 1940, the AICC office appointed the following to visit, inspect, and report in detail on the condition of the PCCs, the satyagraha preparations in progress under them, and the organizational strength and weaknesses of the PCCs: Maulvi Abul Hyat (Bihar, Bengal, Assam); Narendra Sharma (Nagpur, Vidarbha, Bombay, Mahakoshal); Dr B.V. Keskar (Maharashtra); Dharam Yash Dev (Punjab); R.K.L. Nandkeoliyar (C.P., Delhi, Gujarat, Ajmer). In June 1940, Nandkeoliyar inspected Punjab, NWFP, and Sind, also. See AICC, G-28 (Pt. 3)/1940, pp. 110, 121, 145, 161, 165, 167, 614. Also see AICC, G-1 (Pt. 1)/1940, for a letter from Sadik Ali to Maulana Azad, dt. 6 May 1940, on Inspectors sent out by the AICC office.
48. In AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2)/1940, see pp. 61-5, papers relating to the CWC meeting at Wardha, 17 June 1940.

In Utkal, Nagpur, Mahakoshal, Vidarbha, Kerala and the Punjab, the position and maintenance of the accounts of the PCC were not satisfactory, according to reports received by June 1940 from the AICC inspectors. In Mahakoshal: 'The moneys have not been properly banked for fear of impending crisis.' In Vidarbha: 'No receipts were issued for money received.' In Kerala, the PCC had no surplus funds for meeting incidental expenses. In Andhra, the position was satisfactory on the whole, but the PCC had no surplus funds.

In Karnataka, the PCC accounts were in a satisfactory position on the whole, and to the inspector's delight: 'All books were found up to date and neatly written.'

In Tamil Nadu, the inspector had much to praise regarding the financial position and account keeping by the PCC. For the reconstruction of the Congress House (worth Rs 60,000) reduced to ashes by a fire some time earlier, only recently, the PCC had raised a sum of nearly Rs 70,000. All the funds were properly banked, and the account books were properly maintained. According to a financial statement dated 12 March 1939, the PCC had had a revenue income of Rs 19,507, annas 4, and pies 8.

49. For evidence of the love of organizational detail and the quality of mind in a senior Congressman in the 1940s, one may look into the 11-page

handwritten investigative report dated 4 July 1940, from R.K.L. Nandkeolyar on his inspection of the Delhi PCC office from 19 to 24 June 1940. The Congress was no party of 'sentimental agitators', considering its quality of responsible leadership in organizational matters. In AICC, G-28 (Pt. 3)/1940, see Nandkeolyar's report, dated 4 July 1940, on the Delhi PCC.

50. In IAR, 1940, I, pp. 247-50, see Enclosure in AICC, Genl. Secy's, Circular No. 7, dt. Allahabad 4 May 1940. In AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2)/1940, pp. 41, 43, 45, for information based on reports from the PCCs. Kripalani had written in his Circular No. 2, dt. Allahabad, 23 March: 'Rivalries may be inevitable in times of peace but they are dangerous in time of war.' Regarding the conflict between Subhas Bose's group and the orthodox group (branded by Subhas as the 'Khadi-Roy group' in Bengal), see in AICC, G-1 (Pt.1)/1940, pp. 106-7, letter from Arun Chandra Guha Roy, dt. Calcutta 7 June 1940, to Maulana Azad relating the question of rival Congressmen contesting a bye-election in Mymensing East General Constituency. Also, in the same AICC file, see pp. 135-6, letter from Sadiq Ali to Maulana Azad, dt. 6 May 1940, about the Kerala Congress Executive Committee: 'The Satyagraha Committee they have appointed is composed of heterogeneous group. This amalgam will not work. Three members of this Committee (of five) are those who have hitherto ridiculed Gandhiji, non-violence and constructive programme.' K. Kelappan and Janab M.K. Mohiuddin Kutti Saheb were the only members reputed for devotion to the Gandhian way. Kelappan objected to the composition of this Satyagraha Committee. In AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940, pp. 39-57, there is a letter from Pratap Singh, Genl. Secy., PCC, Punjab, Lahore, dt. 24 May 1940, reporting that, though district elections did revive a certain amount of bitterness, group rivalry in the province was on the decrease at the prospect of a struggle against the Government. 'But the public is getting a bit impatient and wrongly suspicious that no struggle may be launched.'
51. See in IAR, 1940, I, pp. 247-9, references to publicity work in AICC, Genl. Secy's, Circular No. 7, dt. Allahabad, 4 May 1940. Reports from several PCCs, dated May and June 1940, are in AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940. The Punjab PCC, in its report of May 1940, showed that they had set up a respectable Publicity Committee, consisting of Nawabzada Mehmood Ali (Chairman), Ranbir (Daily *Milap*), Varinder (*Partap*), Giani Gurumukh Singh Musafar (*Akali Patrika*), Dev Raj Sethi (MLA), Shiv Ram Sewak (*Vir Bharat*), and Professor Abdul Sadar. For information on the publicity work by the PCCs in Bombay and the UP, see AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2) 1940, p. 57.
52. In AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2)/1940, see p. 59; in Papers relating to the CWC meeting, Wardha, 17 June 1940.
53. See in National Archives of India, New Delhi, Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, p. 49, I.B. Abstract of Congress President Maulana Azad's speech, Purushottam Das Park, Allahabad, 13 December 1940.
54. See I.B. Report on Congress Membership, 1938/39, 1939/40, 1940/41; in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/6/41, pp. 1-3.

Curiously, the Government of India, Home Dept., were little concerned about precise information, facts and figures, relating to the Muslim League in these years. 'Muslim League members so far as known have never been counted, and cannot be estimated with any accuracy.' See Nicholas Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47* (London, 1970), Vol. I, No. 269: Telegram, Linlithgow to Amery, 7 March 1942.

55. The AICC office called from the PCCs information relating to membership in April 1940, after satyagraha preparations started in earnest. Earlier, in 1939, Congress leaders had decided to make Congress membership more selective. In 1939-41, probably in later years also, Gandhi thought big numbers a burden to Congress efficiency as an organization preparing for non-violent civil disobedience. The DCCs and the local Congress committees do not appear to have sent to the higher committees necessary information on membership number in these years, though Congress elections were held and completed duly, in all but two provinces (Delhi and Bengal), in February 1940. Later in the year, there were reports of drives, in Karnataka and Gujarat and other places, to enlist members. In 1941, Gandhi told the Maharashtra PCC leaders to consider for enlistment as Congress members those who had already applied, and to attend to the normal duty of the party regarding registration of voters for legislative assemblies and local self-government boards.

The Punjab PCC in a letter (received by the AICC office on 21 May 1940) gave a precise figure: 192,495 for the number of Congress members in the Punjab. See in AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940.

For Intelligence Bureau (Home Dept. G.O.I.) Note, dt. Simla, 26 June 1941, see in Home Deptt. Poll. (I), 4/6/41, p. 5.

56. On the I.B. appreciation of Congress influence, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/6/41, pp. 1-15.
57. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/6/41. The Intelligence Bureau made the necessary distinction between 'Congress membership figures' and 'Congress influence'. It appears from file notings that the Departmental Secretaries saw the possibility of using the membership figures for 1939 and 1941 for propaganda purposes, for suggesting that Congress popularity as a nationalist anti-British party was on the decline, and that the Congress had no moral right to speak for 'India'. For the purposes of international relations and war effort, 'India' meant the Government of India. For the purposes of resisting the demands of political parties in the country, the British Government spokesmen in London and New Delhi, seeking debating points against the Congress, sometimes said that in some respects India was one and in other respects India was not one. Jinnah and the Muslim League resolved in 1941 that there were two Indias, one represented by the League and the other by the rest of the country. For an appreciation of the influence of the League in early 1942, see in Mansergh Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, I, No. 269, Linlithgow to Amery, telegram, dt. 7 March 1942.
58. See IAR, 1940, I, pp. 247-50, AICC Genl. Secy's. Circular No. 7, dt. 4 May 1940, and enclosures. Also see in AICC, G-3/1939-41, p. 77, Sadiq Ali to

Yusuf Meherally, dt. 14 June 1940, saying: 'It is difficult for us to give you the exact figures for the camps held in various provinces. These camps have been held in all the provinces except Kerala, Delhi, Gujarat, Bombay and Ajmere. Most of these provinces have organized besides one provincial camp a large number of district camps.'

For a description of the daily life of trainees (40 volunteers, learning spinning, weaving, ginning, carpet-making, pottery, paper-making, and Hindi, playing traditional games, listening to readings from Rajaji's *Kannan Kattiya Vali*, and in the matter of food training themselves for a sterner life in Jail), see 'For the Final Freedom Fight: Where Clive Planted His Flag — Training of Satyagrahis at Arcot Camp: First of its kind in Tamilnad For Village Uplift', in the *Sunday Times*, 26 May 1940; in AICC, G-4/1940, p. 22, see cutting from this newspaper. K.R. Kalyanaramier, the Organizing Secretary of the camp, said, 'One day on this same mound we will plant our flag of freedom.' He was Secretary, North Arcot, DCC, Ranipet, Tamil Nadu.

59. In *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 247-8, see reports on Satyagraha preparations in April 1940, submitted to the AICC by PCCs, NWFP and Bihar.
60. For the I.B. Memo dt. 2 January 1940, see Home Deptt. Poll. (I), 4/1/40, pp. 6-13.
61. At the end of June 1940, an Intelligence Bureau report, Further Memorandum, dt. 13 August 1940, said that in the UP, the Congress Volunteers numbered 30,178. Their number was approximately 53,000 (satyagrahi volunteers already in jail plus 42,930 yet free), at the end of May 1941, according to a Memorandum on Volunteer Movement, dt. 22 November 1941. For these documents, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/1/40, pp. 14-24, 26-9.
62. For R.S. Pandit's Interim Report, dated Allahabad 15 June 1940, submitted to Maulana Azad, see in AICC, G-28 (Pt. I)/1940, pp. 1-29. At its meeting, 17-21 June 1940 at Wardha, the CWC resolved, with reference to R.S. Pandit's Interim Report on the Congress Volunteer Movement, (1) that the PCCs should encourage and promote the growth of trained volunteers for national service, and (2) that there should be a large measure of uniformity all over India in regard to pledge, cautions, and training of Congress volunteers. In *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 174-6.
63. The Volunteer Pledge prescribed by the Ahmedabad Session of the Congress in 1921 required the following: practice of non-violence in word and deed; endeavour to be non-violent in intent also; belief in swadeshi; work for removal of untouchability; and service to the 'submerged classes'. A volunteer had to declare: 'I am prepared to suffer imprisonment, assault or even death for the sake of my religion and my country without resentment.'

A CWC Resolution adopted at Bombay in November 1921 recommended the establishment of a National Volunteer Corps comprising all Non-Cooperation Volunteer Corps, Khilafat Volunteer Corps and other non-official volunteer bodies. The PCCs were asked to appoint central boards to organize all the existing volunteer corps in their areas. No known bad character was to be enlisted as volunteer. No arms, no stick other than 'an

ordinary stick not longer than 4 ft.' No 'military type' uniform could be used by the Congress volunteers. Khadi shirts, trousers and 'Gandhi caps' were used. In the United Provinces, probably in the Punjab also, the Congress volunteers were trained in drill classified as 'Arms Drill' along with other movements one could see in police parade grounds in towns. 'Hathiyar Band' (Order Arms) and 'Pesh-Kar' (Present Arms) and the like were among twenty-four commands used in Arms Drill, according to a list issued, probably in 1939-40 by N.K. Deo Vasisth, Congress Volunteer Senapati in the United Provinces. The Punjab Government banned military drills in February 1940. In the United Provinces and other areas drill in uniforms and military movements in drills by members of volunteer organizations were banned by an Ordinance issued by the Government of India in early August 1940.

In a statement of the programme of work from 1 March 1940 to 28 February 1941 adopted by the Congress Quami Seva Dal in the United Provinces, the Volunteers undertook the following: (1) village cleansing, (2) Harijan seva, (3) distribution of medicine, (4) spinning, (5) educational work, (6) the propagation of handicrafts and swadeshi, (7) Hindu-Muslim communal amity, (8) the propagation of charkha and khadi, (9) promotion of prohibition, (10) training children to march in step, and practice tournaments.

See AICC, No. 64/1940-41, pp. 1-5; AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2)/1940, pp. 53-9, and 17-31; AICC, C-1/1940, pp. 379-87; AICC, G-16/1942-46, pp. 3-7; AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940, pp. 9-33. Also, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/1/40.

64. In Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/1/40 pp. 14-24, see I.B., Further Memo dt. 13 August 1940 on the Volunteer Movement in India.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. In AICC, G-28 (Pt.1)/1940, pp. 1-29, see R.S. Pandit's Interim Report on the Congress Volunteer Movement. Gandhiji generally approved of the lines on which the United Provinces had organized volunteering from 1939, shedding the military manners and vocabulary used earlier. Jawaharlal helped Ranjit Pandit in drawing up a questionnaire and a tour programme for studying the movement. N.S. Hardikar was requested by Jawaharlal to help Ranjit Pandit with suggestions on reorganizing the Seva Dal (See in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 214-15). Hardikar welcomed the idea of introducing greater uniformity in commands in Hindustani for Congress volunteers all over the country.

68. To ensure, whenever necessary, quick and direct instructions to the DCCs, the AICC office collected in May and June 1940 names and addresses of the DCC presidents and secretaries. Several PCC offices took many weeks to provide these to the AICC office at Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad. The PCC offices, except the most efficient (like those of Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Karnataka, the United Provinces, the Punjab and Bihar) could not respond without much delay to requests for information sent out in circulars and letters issued by Acharya Kripalani (the AICC, Genl. Secy.) and Sadiq Ali, the indefatigable Permanent Secretary of the AICC at Swaraj Bhawan. Courtesy, personal respect and friendship among Con-

gressmen from different parts of India marked the correspondence in the AICC files of these years. In our narrative in the text on the network of Congress committees, we have culled information about the DCCs and town, mandal or circle Congress committees in 1940 from correspondence found mainly in the following: AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940, pp. 2-170; AICC, G-15/1940, pp. 8-97.

69. For satyagrahi enrolment in the United Provinces, see AICC, G-5 (Pt. 4)/1940, pp. 2-7, report dt. 10 June from the PCC in the UP. The Bihar PCC said in a report dated 30 September 1940 that 4,691 satyagrahis were enrolled up to 20 September 1940. Obviously, people who were not really qualified according to the instructions of Gandhiji and the AICC circulars regarding enrolment were not encouraged to sign the Satyagraha Pledge. Also see in AICC, G-28 (Pt. 2)/1940, p. 59, papers relating to the CWC meeting, Wardha, 17 June 1940.
70. In Zaidi and Zaidi, (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Congress*, XII, p. 545, see the figure given by the AICC Genl Secy in his Report for the years 1940-6.
71. On the National Planning Committee, its first three meetings, see in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 67-70, and pp. 261-85 (AICC, Genl Secy's Annual Report, 1939/40). For Jawaharlal's ideas and work on Planning in 1940, see *SWJN*, X, pp. 524-35; XI, pp. 383-416. In Jawaharlal's view, the immediate problem was to attack poverty and unemployment; the long-term problem in India, as elsewhere, would be that of distribution.
72. 'He [Jinnah] contemplates several India's. The Congress contemplates only one India.' See this and other statements of Gandhi, in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 233, 269-71.
73. 'The curious thing is that we [Nehru and Jinnah] never seemed to get talking about the communal difficulty.' Jawaharlal to Zakir Hussain, dt. Lucknow, 25 November 1939; in *SWJN*, X, p. 379. Also, see in *SWJN*, X, p. 376, Jawaharlal's letter of 14 November 1940, informing Rajendra Prasad, the Congress President, that the purely communal question 'does not interest Jinnah'.
74. See in *SWJN*, X, pp. 399-401, Jawaharlal's letter to Jinnah, dt. 14 December 1939. 'In your letter you have emphasized two . . . preliminary conditions before any common ground for discussion can arise. The first is that the Congress must treat the Muslim League as the authoritative and representative organization of the Mussalmans of India. The Congress has always considered the League as a very important and influential organisation of the Muslims and it is because of this that we have been eager to settle any differences that may exist between us. But presumably what you suggest is something more and involves some kind of repudiation by us or dissociation from other Muslims who are not in the League. There are, as you know, a large number of Muslims in the Congress, who have been and are our closest colleagues. There are Muslim organisations like the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, the All India Shia Conference, the Majlis-e-Ahrar, the All India Momin Conference, etc., apart from trade unions and peasant unions which have many Muslims as their members. As a general rule, many of these organizations and individuals have adopted the same political platform as we have done in

the Congress. We cannot possibly dissociate ourselves from them or disown them in any way. . . .

'Your second point is that the Muslim League cannot endorse the Congress demand for a declaration from the British Government. I regret to learn this for this means that, apart from communal questions, we differ entirely on purely political grounds. The Congress demand is essentially for a declaration of war aims and more especially for a declaration of Indian independence and the right of the Indian people to frame their own constitution without external interference. If the Muslim League does not agree to this, this means that our political objectives are wholly dissimilar.'

Jinnah sought to persuade Linlithgow that the Congress was the common enemy of the British and the Muslims. In Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, see on p. 138, an account of Linlithgow-Jinnah talks on 4 September 1939. Linlithgow asked him if he wanted him to turn the Congress Ministries out. 'Yes! Turn them out at once. Nothing else will bring them to their senses. Their object, though you may not believe it, and though I did not believe it till two years ago, is nothing less than to destroy both you British and us Muslims. They will never stand by you.'

75. In *IAR*, I, p. 43, see entry under 24 February 1940.

76. In Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, see pp. 166-8, for an appreciation of the League's Lahore Resolution of 22 March 1940. The viceroy regarded the Congress resolution at Ramgarh as 'Complete political folly', and the League's Lahore resolution as something important. Sir Henry Craik, the Governor of the Punjab, wrote to the viceroy that the Pakistan resolution put the Muslim League in a new position of strength in the Indian politics; that the resolution torpedoed the Congress claim to speak for India; that in future only an exceptionally courageous Muslim leader would oppose Jinnah; and that, in course of time, support for the partition proposal would grow among Muslims. The next year, in 1941, Craik was appointed Political Adviser to the Crown Representative in India; he was in that post during the Cripps Mission negotiation in 1942.

77. For Jinnah's statement, see *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 54, entry under 25 March. Gandhi did admit that the League's Pakistan resolution made at Lahore produced a baffling situation for all nationalists, especially Congressmen. See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 269-71, extract from Gandhi's article headed 'A Baffling Situation'.

78. *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 54.

79. *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 55.

80. *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 61.

81. *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 63.

82. For the Congress view of the League's claim to recognition as the sole authoritative representative organization of Indian Muslims, see Kripalani's letter to Professor Gulshan Rai of Lahore, dt. 27 January 1940. Kripalani wrote: 'If the Muslims in the provinces are not represented by the League but by some other parties, only those parties can have a right to talk about the provincial matters and not the Muslim League. The fact is that the Muslim League has been claiming to represent the Mussal-

mans in every province. The other parties formed by the Muslims in provinces are based upon political and economic programme just as the Krishak party in Bengal. Such parties are not formed on communal lines.' The results of the General Election in 1937 did not show that the Muslim League could claim to represent the Muslims in every province. The Congress General Secretary held that the figures of the League's position, collected by the AICC office and given by him in his article 'Britain's War Aims and India', were correct figures, except a small error in the figures for Sind. These figures, quoted by Gulshan Rai in an article published in the *Civil & Military Gazette* of Lahore on 24 January 1940, were as follows:

Province	Elected on League Ticket	Total Muslim Seats
Assam	9	34
Bengal	39	117
Orissa	Nil	4
Bihar	Nil	39
UP	27	64
The Punjab	2	84
The NWFP	Nil	36
Sind	3	33
CP	Nil	14
Madras	10	28
Bombay	20	29

For Letters of Kripalani and Gulshan Rai, and copy of Gulshan Rai's article, see AICC, 2/1940, pp. 169-79.

83. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 64-7, on the Azad Muslim Conference, and relevant statements. On the government's appreciation on the Muslim parties supporting the Azad Muslim Conference in 1940-2, see Mansergh and Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, I, No. 269, and footnotes.
84. Maulana Mohammed-Al-Faruqui was the Convener of the Provincial Co-ordination Committee of the UP Azad Muslim Conference. A meeting of the Provincial Co-ordination Committee was held at Allahabad on 6 August 1940, under the presidentship of Maulana Abdul Majid of Banares; Maulana Faruqui, Dr Abdur Razzaq, Syed Haider Mehdi, Dr Z.A. Ahmed (Secy. the UP PCC, Publicity Dept., Allahabad), and Maulana Sahid Faqhri attended this meeting. See in AICC, 1-2/1940, Papers relating to the Azad Muslim Conference. Among nationalist Muslim papers in Urdu, the following had large circulation: *Madina* (Bijnor), *Hind* (Calcutta), *Ansari* (Delhi), *Zam Zam* (Lahore), *Ajmal* (Bombay), *Hilal* (Bombay), *Tanjumane Sarhad* (Peshawar), *Momin Gazette* (Kanpur), *Hindustan* (Lucknow), *Arhar* (Saharanpur), and *Sarfaraz* (Lucknow, Shia Political Conference). But the nationalist Muslim press was on the whole weaker in influence on the common people than the pro Muslim League papers exciting communal passions. See in AICC, 1-2/1940, Urdu Press Review, No. 1 (June, 1940).

85. Large maps illustrating theatres of the war were published in newspapers, for instance, the *Statesman* (Calcutta) of 21 May 1940 and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta) of 31 May 1940. Reuter reports of the destruction of Rotterdam and 100,000 killed; the evacuation by the Allies from Flanders and the news that a large number of Indian troops were among the 335,000 men evacuated; Churchill's speech in the House of Commons on 4 June 1940, hoping that in God's good time the New World would step forth with all its power to the rescue of the old; Roosevelt's submission to the Congress on 31 May of a \$1,000 million programme for US defence, were all fully reported in the leading newspapers in Calcutta.
86. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 73, entry under 29 May; p. 76, entries under 3 June, for information in official statements on the Government of India's financial strength.
87. See the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 2 June 1940, for the government Press Note, dt. 1 June 1940.
88. As to what was expected of the Viceroy of India in view of the war, see in Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, p. 187, telegram received on 3 October 1940, from Churchill offering Linlithgow an extension of office for twelve months from April 1941. Also see in Mansergh and Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, I, No. 135; Linlithgow to Amery on 16 February 1942: 'Indeed, I do not think it is to exaggerate to affirm that the key to success in this war is now very largely in my hands.'
89. See *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 70, 76, for Asaf Ali's statements. Asaf Ali was a member of the CWC, and Secretary, Central Assembly Congress Party.
90. See *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 73, for Satyamurti's speech. Satyamurti was the Deputy Leader of the Central Assembly Congress Party and Mayor of Madras.
91. See *IAR*, 1940, p. 78, and pp. 72, 76, also, for Rajaji's remarks.
92. *SWJN*, XI, p. 33.
93. *SWJN*, XI, pp. 27-8. This statement of 10 May, and a copy of a letter from J. Nehru to A.N. Spalding, N.Y. City, USA, dt. Allahabad, 22 May 1940, were filed in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/3/40, among IB information. In his letter to Spalding, a friend of India, Jawaharlal said that the only way to break the psychological barrier between nationalist India and England completely was to give India the feeling of complete freedom from British imperialism.
94. Letter dt. Wardha, 16 May, 1940; in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 29-33.
95. Letter dt. Wardha, 16 May, 1940; in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 34-6.
96. In *SWJN*, XI, pp. 36-8, 39-40.
97. In *SWJN*, XI, pp. 48-50.
98. See in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 193-4, Maulana Azad's opening speech at the AICC meeting, Poona, 27 July 1940. Also, see Mahadev Desai's statement summarizing Gandhiji's view, 'violent co-operation by India in the war would seal the fate of non-violence in the political and international field for all time'; in *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: A Biographical Memoir* (2nd ed., 1946), p. 129.
99. 'I pleaded hard with the Committee', said Gandhi in commenting on the Wardha statement. See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 286-7, for extract from Gandhiji's article: 'Both Happy and Unhappy', and the CWC

resolution. Ghaffar Khan was not present; Gandhiji attended the afternoon sittings; Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan and Vijayalakshmi Pandit were present by special invitation at the Wardha meeting.

100. In Simla, too, crowds surged round Mahatmaji's rickshaw for his *darshan* while on his way to the Viceregal Palace (*Hindusthan Standard*, 30 June 1940). Linlithgow was yet friendly and, as ever patient with Gandhi, the only man who could, in the Viceroy's appreciation, deliver the goods to the British on behalf of 'Hindu India'. For Linlithgow's view of the three-hour talk with Gandhi on 29 June 1940 at Simla, see Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, pp. 177-8. 'Gandhi was completely impervious to the Viceroy's advances.' Linlithgow had seen Jinnah a day earlier, on 28 June. Jinnah had seemed anxious above all to get into the administration. 'He [Jinnah] would do nothing, he [Jinnah] said, to risk the severance of the British connection; he was not prepared to consider any sort of constituent assembly. He accepted the need of the Executive Council for unity and for full co-operation in the war.'
101. See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 292-3, for extract from Gandhiji's article written at Delhi on 1 July: 'Some Vital Questions'. Mahatma Gandhi's Appeal to Britons was given to the press (API report dt. New Delhi), on 2 July 1940. The *Leader* (Allahabad) published it on 4 July 1940, and wrote a critical editorial, 'Mahatma Gandhi's Recipe', on the following day. The prophet of *ahimsa*, however, ignored the world's ridicule and thought it worthwhile to make from time to time his appeal for organized mass non-violent resistance and non-cooperation against all invaders.
102. The *Leader*, 11 July 1940, published Gandhiji's statement of 8 July on the Delhi offer under the heading: 'Tremendous step, for good or evil'. These were Gandhi's words. People began to speculate on the possibility of Congressmen accepting office, if government would make a firm and precise statement of liberal measures. Gandhi himself appeared convinced that this time the government meant to get the Congress into partnership in the war effort. See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 299, 315-26.
103. See extracts from the CWC proceedings in Tendulkar, *Ghaffar Khan*, pp. 315-26.
104. See Tendulkar, *Ghaffar Khan*, pp. 327-8. The *Hindusthan Standard* (Delhi), 10 July 1940, carried the statement dt. New Delhi, 8 July, Ghaffar Khan considered resigning his membership of the AICC also. There was consternation and confusion in the minds of Pathan tribesmen till about the middle of August, because of Badshah Khan's resignation. See *SWJN*, XI, pp. 228-30; Jawaharlal's letter to Abul Kalam Azad, dt. 4 August 1940; and to Mohammed Yunus, dt. 6 August.
105. See *IAR* 1940, II, p. 4.
106. The *Leader*, 14 July 1940, published these telegrams, reported, on 12 July, by a news agency from Bombay.
107. Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, p. 177.

108. See *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 4, under 9 July. Savarkar had met the viceroy for discussions on 5 July.
109. See Jawaharlal's letter dt. 16 July 1940 to Maulana Azad and letter dt. 18 July 1940 to Vallabhbhai Patel, in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 76, 81-2. Maulana Azad's and Rajaji's interpretation created confusion in the minds of many Congressmen regarding the scope of the Delhi offer, and Ghaffar Khan and Prafulla Ghosh had written about this to Jawaharlal.
110. In *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 7-8, see entries under 19 July and 20 July. The Gujarat PCC did not pass any formal resolution but the sense of their meeting held on 20 July, under the chairmanship of Sardar Patel, was overwhelmingly in support of the Delhi Offer. Sardar Patel's support, at the Delhi CWC meeting 3-7 July, had been an important factor in the making of the Delhi Offer.
111. On the AICC meeting at Poona, 27-8 July 1940, see in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 193-6.
112. See *SWJN*, XI, pp. 87-8.
113. *SWJN*, XI, pp. 91-6.
114. See the *Statesman* (Delhi), 30 July 1940, for API report of proceedings, AICC, Poona, 28 July; this extract is in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/3/40, K.W., among papers relating to J. Nehru. For a sketch of Rajaji as Congress leader see Yusuf Meherally, *Leaders of India*, Vol. I (6th ed. 1946), pp. 57-63. This delightful work was first published in 1940. Meherally said, Rajaji's eloquence helped the Delhi Offer to be ratified by the AICC at Poona. Rajaji was said to be 'the brain trust' of the Gandhi group, just as Sardar Patel was known as its directing hand. Rajaji represented in 1940 'the mood of weariness with strife', wrote Meherally. See in A.R.H. Copley, *The Political Career of C. Rajagopalachari* (Delhi, 1978), pp. 174-5, an extract from Rajaji's letter to his friend G. Natesan who had sent a letter of congratulation on Rajaji's success in connection with the Delhi-Poona Offer of July 1940: 'But you seem to think that what I have achieved is only a preliminary and that success and achievement would consist only in complete surrender! I am a reasonable man, a practical-minded fellow, a Conservative, a lover of peace, and one who dislikes to gamble on poor people's lives. But I cannot give in to Britain's arrogance, or be victimised by her trickeries. I have gone to the point that Honour can take us to, and I cannot surrender any further and am prepared for the worst thereafter. I have seen enough of these people. I see only a desire to loot and exploit. I cannot glory in association with this policy.' There is a ring of truth in this self-portraiture by Rajaji; it makes intelligible his attitude to British rule in the period 1940 to 1947, a subject of some interest in that period to Congressmen, Britons, and such Indians as would have accepted dominion status for India as worthwhile.
115. Maulana Azad in *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 35-6, wrote that within a month of the Poona meeting Sardar Patel changed his views and accepted Gandhiji's position regarding India's participation in the war. Sardar Patel was the acknowledged great captain of the organization men in the Congress. He was the Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board.

116. Maulana Azad received a letter from Gandhiji fully supporting his decision not to meet Linlithgow. 'In his [Gandhi's] view my refusal to meet the Viceroy was a symbol of God's grace.' See, Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 36. For the correspondence between Azad and Linlithgow relating the 'August Offer' see *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 200-01.
 117. See Mansergh and Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, I, Appendix I, for the text of the August Offer. See R.J. Moore, *Churchill: Cripps, and India, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 33-6, on the making of the August Offer. Also in Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, pp. 180-2, for Churchill's intervention in the plan developed by Amery and Linlithgow. 'Churchill took the impending declaration in hand. He refused to agree [and the Cabinet backed him] to any date for Dominion Status and otherwise hedged the draft round with more verbiage and equivocation than Amery or Linlithgow had wished.'
 118. See *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 16.
 119. *Ibid.*
 120. Quoted in fn. 2 in *SWJN*, XI, p. 121.
 121. In *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 16, entry under 13 August, Gandhi's statement to the *News Chronicle*.
 122. *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 20.
 123. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p. 36. For a fair summary of the attitude of Congressmen generally to the August Offer of Linlithgow, one may quote the following from a letter, dt. Nasik City, 12 August 1940, from R.H. Gadre, Member Maharashtra PCC, to the Congress president: 'The Viceroy has rejected the hand of co-operation offered by the resolutions passed at the Poona sitting in a most unceremonious manner. The goal of complete independence does not appear to be even within the distant vision of the Viceroy. Dominion Status so much clamoured for and enamoured of by the Hindu Sabha, the Liberals and even the *Times of India*, does not find any place in the Viceroy's declaration. Even the most sober and elementary demand about the formation of a National Cabinet at the Centre has been trampled down, and in its stead we are asked to be content with the nomination of a few more Viceroy's puppets. As if this was not enough, the Viceroy has once for all denied the sole authority of the Congress to represent the national demand. The Viceroy claims to be the guardian of the interests of the Minorities, the vested interests and the Princes.' See AICC, G-1 (Pt. 1), pp. 83-4.
- Maulana Azad's letter to Linlithgow, dt. Wardha, 19 August 1940, said: 'These [the terms of the August Offer] are totally at variance with the proposals last put forward by the Congress at Poona and with the objective of the Congress. The Working Committee are of opinion that they cannot associate themselves in any way with these proposals.' See AICC, G-1 (Pt. 1)/1940, pp. 71-2 A.
124. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/13/40, p. 16, Extract from the *National Herald*, 29 August 1940. An official noted it as provocative and objectionable, and probably not from J. Nehru's pen. On 29 August 1940, Jawaharlal sent a cable to the President, India League, USA, in which the main

point was: 'Congress rejects Viceroy's offer which perpetuates autocracy.' Earlier, on 21 August, in a statement to the press at Bombay, Jawaharlal congratulated the Congressmen in the UP on the arrest of Krishna Datt Paliwal, President of the PCC: 'Sir Maurice Hallett, the Governor of the U.P., said recently that "those who are not with us are against us". If he spoke for the British Government and British imperialism, then let me assure him that we are not with him, and we are entirely opposed to this government and imperialism, and this opposition will not lessen or fade whatever may befall us. We owe allegiance to India alone, and we serve the cause of her freedom.' See *SWJN*, XI, pp. 122-3, 130. The Nehru problem was becoming acute for the UP administration from early August, because of the Congress volunteers who were in no mood to submit to an ordinance banning the wearing of uniforms and military drill by unauthorized volunteer organizations. On 11 August, an all-India event had been Jawaharlal's visit to Kanpur to see the Congress Quami Seva Dal rally. 'There was a procession, a march past and speech by me to a huge crowd of about 50,000. For an hour during the procession I stood at the back of the car. Then I stood saluting while nearly 1,000 volunteers marched past, and then I held forth for an hour and forty minutes! See Jawaharlal to Indira Nehru, dt. Cawnpore, 11 August 1940; in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 476-7.

125. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/13/40, pp. 2-41.

126. For the text of Jawaharlal's cable to Krishna Menon, dt. Allahabad 8 September 1940, see *SWJN*, XI, pp. 134-5. A copy of this cable was duly filed by the Home Dept. officials in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/13/40, p. 51. In the same file, among extracts from the daily situation reports, source reports of the IB, newspaper cuttings etc., on civil disobedience preparation by Congressmen, see p. 24 for reference to Sardar Patel; pp. 25, 41, reporting Rajaji's activities; and p. 44 for report on Bhulabhai Desai's speech, noticing among other things, Great Britain's progress in the War. Thousands of people attended Congress meetings in big towns. In p. 1 of this file, Sir Richard Tottenham, I.C.S., Additional Secretary, Home Department, Government of India, noted on 2 September 1940 that the Home Member was anxious that all developments should be watched with particular care, and 'We certainly cannot hold our hand until the Congress has succeeded in preparing the way for a civil disobedience movement'. For extracts from speeches by Congress leaders, also see *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 20-6.

127. See extract from the *Hindustan Times*, Delhi, 3 September 1940; in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/13/40.

128. For the text of the resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee at Bombay, 16 September 1940, see Mansergh and Lumby, *Transfer of Power*, I, Appendix II. For the AICC proceedings, Bombay, 15-16 September, see *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 211-20.

129. See the *Modern Review* (Calcutta), October 1940, pp. 353-4.

130. See the AICC proceedings, Bombay, 15-16 September, in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 211-20. On 17 September, at Bombay there was a Conference of the presidents and secretaries of the PCCs and Congress ex-ministers.

The Congress General Secretary issued on 19 September a Circular (No. 18) to the PCCs explaining briefly the issue in the coming civil disobedience movement. 'The present struggle is therefore confined to the issue of the free expression of Indian opinion on the forcible participation of India in the War.' See *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 224-5.

131. The Congress Working Committee met at Bombay, 13-18 September 1940. The Committee resolved on fullest co-operation to Gandhiji in conducting the civil disobedience movement. The resolution on 'a short course in obedience' was specially required because in the UP Congress volunteers were breaking law at places. Jawaharlal issued on 18 September a statement to the press saying that there was a meeting of the UP Emergency Committee at Bombay, and the CWC had considered the issue of civil disobedience. In view of the resolution of these committees: 'Volunteer camps should conclude their period of training and no new volunteer camps should be started till further directions are issued.'

132. See the *Modern Review*, October 1940, pp. 368-9.

133. *Ibid.*, p. 356.

134. See *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 27, under 20 September. Under the same date, there is an entry on M.N. Roy's comment that the AICC resolutions adopted at Bombay would only please Berlin and Rome. The CWC meeting at Bombay (13-18 September) had accepted M.N. Roy's resignation from the Congress. Earlier on 7 September, the PCC in the UP had passed a resolution suspending M.N. Roy from the membership of all elective organizations of the Congress and demanded an explanation of his conduct. On 10 September, Jawaharlal wrote to Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Acting Secretary, UPCC: 'The main charge is that Roy has carried on persistent propaganda in public against the Ramgarh Congress decision.' M.N. Roy was urging a policy of co-operation with the British Government in the war, the formation by 'more realist politicians' of popular ministries in the provinces, and the co-operation of 'freedom-loving progressive and democratic elements in the public life of India in the organisation of a mass anti-fascist movement'. See *SWJN*, XI, pp. 234-5, 249-50; and *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 20, 27. Roy denied the charge of indiscipline against him, in reply to the letter from the UPCC, demanding an explanation.

135. *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 27.

136. See in Glendevon, *Linlithgow*, pp. 185-6. In his telegram to Amery, Linlithgow said:

I must tell you that, knowing him as well as I do, I have now little doubt that he is bent on mischief and that relations may break down at the next talk. You may count on me to continue up to the last moment to do my best to avoid a conflict, but I think the moment has come when you will wish to warn the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet that the conflict which I have laboured for so long to avoid may now, despite our best endeavours, be imminent.

137. See *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 29-30. Also, see Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, p. 341, Gandhi's statement of 5 October 1940, on the breakdown of relations at Simla on 30 September. The viceroy was never ruffled and never dis-

courteous. 'He listens to your argument with a patience and attention, I have never known any other viceroy or any high functionary show in an equal measure.' There was, however, little of negotiation: 'He meets you with his decision on the matter under discussion already made.'

Chapter V

The Individual Civil Disobedience (October 1940–December 1941)

Bhupen Qanungo

THE CONGRESS never organized a movement more glorious in Gandhian terms than the Individual Satyagraha campaign from October 1940 to December 1941, for no civil disobedience movement was more civil, more distinguished by dissociation from indiscipline and violence, than this campaign, combining plenty of goodness in civilizing endeavour with political finesse in regard to the main Congress demand: Indian independence. Self-appointed satyagrahis had no role in 1940-1, either in the eyes of Mahatma Gandhi who controlled it from the beginning to end, or in the eyes of the magistrates who applied the Defence of India Rules of 1939 in satyagraha cases. In spite of its obvious inability to rise to the required level of non-violence because of its size, India was the only country and the Congress was the organization which, in Gandhi's view, could make pioneering experiments in the Gandhian way. The movement of 1940-1 was an experiment in a 'purer' or strictly restricted form of civil disobedience, without the element of political drama which characterized the mass satyagraha movements. The virtue of this experiment will be appreciated by all those, in India and elsewhere, who are engaged in building a civilization based on non-violence.

From the time 'the German War' broke out in Europe in 1939 and India was involved in it, willy nilly, it seems Gandhi adopted for himself three principles of action: First, being a pacifist, he should preach 'no-war'; second, being a nationalist to some purpose beyond political independence, he would preach a 'Constructive Programme' for a new and nobler civilization; and third, deep down in him there being a Congressman speaking and still strong, he should uphold the Congress ideals as evolved since the First World War. These three principles run as threads connecting many of his pronouncements and decisions in 1940-1.

An ideal satyagrahi is free from malice towards his adversary, and an ideal satyagraha action has to be so controlled that it does no great harm

either to the adversary or to the cause vindicated by the satyagrahi. This in brief was the truth of satyagraha as evolved by Gandhi in half a century of experience in public life and imparted to Congressmen. Satyagraha for purna swaraj had become, long before 1940, the Congress way of struggle for freedom. In the model Satyagraha of 1940-1, more than any other man, or influence of place and time, it was Mahatma Gandhi who imposed on the Congress a rule of action in civil disobedience providing a minimum of embarrassment to the British people consistent with a non-violent movement by a great nationalist organization which, under the circumstances, had to vindicate its right to exist for the promotion of freedom.

Whatever the Congress did affected lakhs of people. Because of his unique personality, power of friendly persuasion, influence on the masses, long years of service to the nation, and position of authority in satyagraha, recognized formally also by the All India Congress Committee in its Ramgarh Resolution of March 1940 and the Bombay Resolution of September 1940, Mahatma Gandhi could restrain Congressmen from offering, in 1940-1, a greater quantum of civil disobedience. He discountenanced every idea put forward by others which could mix up a movement by selected Congressmen with the efforts of 'the Violence Party'. The master of satyagraha conducted the campaign as gently as possible, reducing it to mere symbolical, or token acts by the spring of 1941.

The Congress lost nothing by the studied slow tempo, and prolonged movement, which seemed to be unending, without succeeding at the time in persuading the British Government to yield to the Congress demand for freedom of speech. Gandhi was in no hurry to claim success for the Congress in the enterprise for purna swaraj. No systematic demonstration of disobedience by subject people could be good for the imperialist cause and for loyalists, in the long run. Organized non-violent disobedience by Congressmen could erode respect for the British rulers rather rapidly, by accelerating the processes of political education of the masses in a country where courting of suffering, in any form, tended to arouse popular sympathy and admiration. After a spell, in 1937-9, of thinking in terms of office, patronage, and some power as provincial ministry-makers, Congressmen needed a renewal of their 'inner strength', or moral armament. The basic purpose of satyagraha was to evoke among the people the spirit of sacrifice for a cause. Since the early years of this century, the Congress took special pride in being the promoters of this spirit among nationalists. In 1940-1, Gandhi and the Congress evoked, and sustained for a length of time, a new slow-rising swell of the spirit of sacrifice among themselves and other nationalists. It was upon this rising swell that Gandhi would perform, in

1942, when his sense of timing indicated a bigger movement would lead him to a crescendo: 'Quit India!'

1. Hazard in Disobedience

No active nationalist or Congressman in British India was timid. There were vast jails in every province; a number of these, for instance in the Andamans, Alipore, Dum Dum, Dacca, Yeravada, Sabarmati, Hijli, Hazaribagh, Peshawar, Lahore, Trichinopolly, and Deoli, were places well known to freedom fighters of both violent and non-violent creeds. There were hundreds of thousands of Indian government servants, Indian mercenaries and police, and Indian magistrates who upheld the British authority in India. By 1939 few of them were, however, impervious to the ideals of independence, or Indianness, floating in the wind. 'The civil disobedience movements are a conflict with ourselves to overcome our own weaknesses,' said Jawaharlal in an address to the Political Science Association of the Allahabad University in March 1940. 'The students who have gathered here do not know what was actually the condition twenty years ago; the shouts they raise today in the streets for their freedom, even the greatest of us was afraid to whisper in private.'

The first part of a non-violent movement, a technique of generating power in people, was to remove the fear of the government from the hearts of the people and to change their outlook by ideas and deeds of moral courage. An armed rebellion could not be raised among the poor in a country systematically kept disarmed since the Mutiny of 1857 and held by a British army of occupation equipped with artillery. 'The Indian army is kept so much in isolation that it is not yet affected by the national movement, though there are chances, after a series of movements, that they will feel the pinch since they are drawn from the rural population and will be affected in the course of the struggle in which their own kith and kin will be involved.' Individual violent actions might draw the attention of the people, but violence could never be a mass technique. 'It cannot reach the masses. Even from the technical point of view it is bad, because it comes in the way of organising the masses.' Even the British soldier found it difficult to shoot or deal violently with non-violent quiet people. 'It demoralised him to shoot the people who, within their civil rights, acted without violence.'

Firing and lathi charges on active nationalist demonstrators, ill-treatment by the police and jailers, rigorous imprisonment under a harsh criminal law were accepted hazards in the struggle for freedom. Government had ample powers under the criminal law to suppress and punish severely whichever person or organization threatened the security and tranquillity of the Indian Empire. Even before the Congress ministries resigned in 1939, the governor general and the governors were preparing for repressive action and considering the expediency of

a 'lightning war' against the Indian National Congress in case of difficulty with the party.² The legal powers of the government to curb civil liberties in the country were made absolute by the Defence of India Act of September 1939 (based on the ordinance of 3 September 1939) modelled on a similar Act of 1915. Under the Defence of India Rules (DIR), the authorities could suppress any anti-government action, speech, printed word, meeting or demonstration. Arrest and detention without trial, internment and externment, orders for periodical reporting to a police station by personal presence, were made easier under the rules. The Central Government could put into force the DIR by notification in the Gazette, in such areas and dates as appointed for implementation by provincial and local executive authorities. Magistrates of different grades could be included to constitute Special Tribunals for summary trial. A person qualified to become a High Court Judge would be appointed, under the Rules, one of the members of a Special Tribunal required on occasions of trial for offences punishable by death or by transportation for life, or by imprisonment for a term extending to ten years. In such cases only, a person convicted under the DIR would have the right of appeal (thanks to the efforts of nationalist members in the Central Legislative Assembly during the debates on the Defence of India Bill in September 1939).³ In other cases, the provisions for summary record of evidence and summary trial, without a convict's right of appeal or right of revision, enabled a magistrate to administer 'justice' far more speedily than an ordinary court of law. By early March 1940, some newspapers were saying that the Government was thinking of banning the Congress.⁴

It was not fear of the government armed with the DIR that led Gandhi to say again and again, from early 1940 to about September 1940, that he refused to be hustled into a civil disobedience movement.⁵ Necessary organizational preparations would take months of hard work.⁶ Much of Gandhi's work was always done by patient and personal negotiation with his supporters and opponents. Above all, Gandhi had to persuade himself about the necessity, proper timing, moral preparedness, his own and of a fair number of Congressmen, and of India at large, before he would finally make up his mind to give the signal for a satyagraha movement and proceed with it with determination and a sense of urgency, all the while maintaining his habitual circumspection and consideration of principles. Gandhi had a way of absorbing information and ideas from others, according to the needs of the occasion. He did not claim papal infallibility, but he did expect from others some consideration for his authority and judgement in the matter of satyagraha, his distinctive contribution to the Indian struggle under the Congress tricolour. He made many statements, in the months preceding the Individual Satyagraha movement, to the effect that the country was not

prepared for a civil disobedience movement. At Ramgarh, in March 1940, he asked the members of the Congress Working Committee to enlighten him on the question: Was the country prepared for satyagraha? Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a man after Gandhi's heart in the matter of nobility in politics, replied:

If civil disobedience is confined to jail-going many are prepared for this in the Frontier. But civil disobedience is not jail-going only. Those who go to jail do not understand its significance. I doubt if we are worthy of the cause for which we want to fight. The little power that came to us revealed in true colours those whom we considered angels. It is astounding the amount of corruption I saw about me when we came to possess a little power. Civil disobedience is a dangerous thing unless we first create a set of men who will prove worthy of freedom when achieved. We must purify ourselves and purify the others.

Sardar Patel said that the Congress should not be stampeded into a campaign of civil resistance, that the forces of violence and indiscipline were on the increase, while there was danger from an alliance between the Muslim League and the princes. Rajagopalachari was opposed to civil disobedience at this stage:

We will be crushed if civil disobedience is started. It will be a set-back to the clock. The technique of defence against civil disobedience has been perfected. We may have to wait for one year or more, for a suitable atmosphere to be created. Any hasty action may result in complete demoralization. Labour troubles will lead to violence and there will be communal discord.

Maulana Azad held that the Congress should make active preparations for civil disobedience, decide the form of the fight, and fight to obtain some big change in the existing situation in the country and in the British mind. He observed:

Non-violence can take us very far. We need indeed set no limits to it if the weapon of non-violence is perfect. Our strength will determine the efficacy of the weapon. The war situation and our internal strength, their difficulties and other considerations, give us an opportunity for self-determination of some kind and not complete independence. I don't think that unless some extraordinary external upheaval occurs, we can oblige them to accept our full demand. Our present strength is limited. As things are, we cannot have before us a definite picture of the struggle ahead as we had in 1930.

The Congress demand for a constituent assembly did not, the president said, rule out an understanding with the British Government at some stage. Jawaharlal held that Congressmen had to fight and meet the government aggression in the form of systematic arrest of Congress

workers since the Congress ministries resigned. The discussion in the Working Committee strengthened Gandhi's conviction that the country was not ready for non-violent mass civil disobedience; he did not agree to start a movement in the wake of the Ramgarh resolution. 'Whatever has been done in the U.P. is good. But I cannot evolve non-violence from the awakening created there by Jawaharlalji.' The big Congress had become unwieldy; he found no suitable material for a fight. He had grown more rigid about the goal; he was no more talking in terms of dominion status. A non-violent army could be raised by disciplined work and not by agitational propaganda. 'I don't want the people to be crushed. If a fight is launched without proper preparations, it is the poor who will suffer.' Gandhi thought he might find a way out, if his relations with the Congress were severed, to free him from the duty of carrying on his shoulders the burden of the Congress organization, while making further researches in non-violence. 'I am sure that, if you release me, I may be able to give civil disobedience a purer and nobler shape.' Having tried the experiment of non-violent civil disobedience throughout his life, he would certainly try it once again when he found his men ready. 'I may even do it alone at a pinch. This is what I did at Champaran.'

As Azad said, nobody could think of a Congress movement of civil disobedience without Gandhiji. Azad and Jawaharlal argued again with him, at the Working Committee meeting held at Wardha on 18 April 1940, that a struggle could not be avoided. Sardar Patel thought some sort of action should be taken; otherwise there would be demoralization in Congress ranks. Dr Syed Mahmud analysed the Muslim opposition to the Congress; in his view, being guided by the spirit of Hindu revival and reform, the Congress did little work for and among the Muslim community. Asaf Ali thought that the Muslim League was supported by the majority of Muslims, that the Hindu Mahasabha and the Liberals, also, were against the Congress, and that the time was not favourable for starting a civil disobedience movement. Asaf Ali noticed divisions among the people even about swaraj, the aim of the national struggle. Rajendra Prasad was of the opinion that a mass civil disobedience movement would mean civil war, because any conflict with the British Government would indirectly be a quarrel with the Muslim League, which feared that the Congress might obtain an accession of strength, ultimately, through a civil disobedience movement; the Lahore Resolution of the League indicated that the League would resist a Congress movement to gain power. Rajagopalachari held that, in deciding the issue, the Congress should not be obsessed with the idea of prestige, and that all factors pointed to the failure of a civil disobedience movement at this stage. In his opinion, the Congress demand could be modulated to its existing strength and to the support it was likely to get

from the public. Gandhi felt there could be no mass civil disobedience. By mass civil disobedience he meant such disobedience by indefinite large numbers. Nor was it possible, in view of the lack of discipline and unity among the groups in the Congress, to organize any corporate non-violent movement. He feared that the people would be cowed down, and if they would act, they would do so violently. The government also could complicate the situation this time, by abstaining from a policy of quick suppression. They would allow time to the forces opposed to the Congress, particularly the Muslim League and the terrorist Khaksars to react. In Azad's view, Gandhiji was exaggerating the importance of the Khaksars and under-estimating the harm the Congress would do to itself by changing its policies midstream. If a movement were not started at this stage, the forces of opposition to the Congress would gain in strength and the Khaksars would become worse bullies than they were at the moment, said the president. The general public in the country respected the Congress; the Congress could go its own way as resolved at Ramgarh.⁸ Maulana Azad always gave great importance to the element of public respect in the Congress position.

At the Working Committee meeting of 18 April at Wardha, another significant trend in Gandhi's thinking about his satyagraha plan became clear. He again rejected the idea of involving large numbers of satyagrahis. He thought he should begin the movement with only a few, and that, if there were discipline of the kind he demanded from participants, he could make a well-controlled movement of individual civil disobedience which would not degenerate into mass disobedience involving indefinite, uncontrolled numbers. The masses would have no direct connection with individual civil disobedience, if there were no disobedience of his instructions. With Gandhian control and technique of satyagraha properly applied, the participation of even 50,000 satyagrahis (a number suggested by Jawaharlal) would not mean that the action had become a mass struggle, said Gandhi. In two provinces, Bengal and the Punjab, any movement by indefinite numbers could degenerate into movement against the provincial ministries. He was receiving letters from all over the country asking him what next: Should they leave their government jobs and prepare for satyagraha? He was telling everybody to keep ready. Gandhi told the Working Committee that he was in no hurry about starting a movement, and that his gaze was fixed on the developing internal situation and not on the war in Europe and the international situation. He did not accept Jawaharlal's interpretation of the recent arrests of Congressmen as signifying the government's determination to goad the Congress into civil disobedience. When Gandhi felt that the government was bent upon goading the Congress to it, he would not wait for numbers to begin satyagraha.⁹ In the event, he did not feel that way till September 1940.

The arrest of Congressmen of the left wing appeared to gain momentum in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, and the Punjab from early 1940. Commercial and industrial interests were disturbed by dearness allowance disputes between management and labour. In February-March, there were labour troubles in the Imperial Tobacco Cigarette factories, the Tata Iron and Steel Company, various factories in Kanpur, and in many sugar factories and textile mills. From 4 March to 14 April, there was a general strike of textile workers in Bombay where Communist Party workers were known to be active in a big way. This strike involved 150,000 workers and the closure of 60 mills.¹⁰ In the United Provinces and Bihar, cultivators were hit hard by the decision of the sugar mills to lower the purchase price of sugar-cane. In the mining areas of Bihar, organized labour trouble was ascribed to preachings by radical Socialist and Communist workers of Bengal and Bihar. On 15 March 1940, the Government of India issued a press note from New Delhi stating that, although the Communist Party in India had been declared an unlawful body some time ago, an underground organization of Communists continued to operate in the country. Hence, in discharge of its responsibility for the defence of India, and the efficient prosecution of the war, the Central Government now found it necessary to pass orders for the detention of the principal Communist leaders.¹¹ In the following months, the government issued numerous orders of detention, internment, externment, search of premises, seizure of objectionable material, and punishment of owners of presses and publishers and printers of revolutionary propaganda. As, in the matter of repression, the authorities did not discriminate between Communists and Socialists and revolutionaries, and labour leaders, kisan leaders, and Forward Bloc men still sheltered under the Congress umbrella, a cry went up among the leftists generally that the Congress should reply to the government's policy of repression of nationalists and anti-imperialists.¹²

Jawaharlal's contention in the Working Committee in March and April, that the government was slowly but surely goading the Congress into civil disobedience, was justified by information relating to cases of arrests, convictions, internments, externments, searches of premises, gagging orders, fines, demands for deposit of cash security and other repressive measures, compiled by the AICC office from daily press reports and included in circular letters to the PCCs for information. We give below samples of such information, to give to the reader an idea of the body of the AICC, provincial, and district-level nationalists who were active workers under the Congress umbrella in 1940. It can be assumed that few of the Congress workers arrested by the police before Gandhi ordered Individual Satyagraha in October 1940 were strictly non-violent Gandhians. The police ordinarily dismissed strict Gandhi-

ans as innocuous, amusing gentlemen engaged in commendable rural welfare work. In Bengal, where strict Gandhians were never numerous, the number of arrests and prohibitory orders under the DIR in these months was higher than in other provinces.¹³ In twenty-four districts in Bengal, about 478 persons were warned, 533 arrested, 59 otherwise restricted, 126 held in custody, 100 convicted, and 2 externed, in April-May 1940. Among these were Maulvi Ashrafuddin Ahmed Chowdhury (Secretary, Bengal PCC), Trailokyanath Chakravarty (AICC), Sukhendu Dastidar (Bengal PCC), Satya Bakshi (Forward Bloc), Gopal Halder (Forward Bloc), and Sisir Roy (Secretary, AICC Organizing Committee of the Labour Party of India). The police commissioner of Calcutta issued a notification under the DIR directing that within the period from 21 April to 20 October 1940, no person should convene, organize, hold or take out any public procession, meeting or assembly without intimating three days in advance the names of speakers, subject for discussion, names of conveners, organizers, and number of volunteers to be employed. Besides taking action against revolutionary publications of all sorts in Bengali, the Bengal Government threatened with punishment the editors and printers of two important dailies published from Calcutta, the *Basumati* and the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*.

In Bihar, Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary of the All-India Congress Socialist Party, was arrested shortly before the Ramgarh Congress, and sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment on a charge of delivering an anti-war speech at Jamshedpur on 8 February 1940.¹⁴ Among the seven notable labour leaders externed from the busy mining-industrial areas in Bihar were Abdur Rahman Khan (President, Bengal Labour Party) and Harnam Singh Malhi (Forward Bloc, Jamshedpur). Pirzada Syed Shah Sulaiman (the sixth 'dictator', All-India Majlis-Ahrar) was sentenced by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Bihar Shareef to one year's simple imprisonment on a charge of having delivered a speech contravening the DIR.

In the United Provinces, among the Congressmen arrested in this period were Bhupendranath Sanyal (AICC), Kedarnath Arya (AICC), Rajendradutta Nigam (PCC), Pandit Raghubar Dayal (President, Ballia DCC), and Algurai (President, Azamgarh DCC). Police raided and searched the Kashi Vidyapith in Varanasi, and the Town Congress premises in Jhansi.¹⁵

In Delhi, Maulana Imdad Sabri (General Secretary, DCC) and Bhal Singh (General Secretary, PCC) were arrested. In Ajmer-Merwara, warnings were given to patriotic papers: the *Navajyoti*, the *Vijaya*, and the *Arya Martand*, more than once; and the National Flag hoisted by the Khadi Exhibition in the town was removed by the police, an incident which evoked protest from Mahatma Gandhi.

In the Punjab, among the leaders arrested were Tikaram Sukhan (AICC), Kapoorchand Jain (Jullundur Congress Committee), Pandit Aminchand (Forward Bloc), and Syed Ataulla Shah Bukhari (Ahrar).¹⁶ In Bombay, H.V. Kamath (Forward Bloc) and S.A. Dange (labour leader); in Maharashtra, V.M. Bhuskute (Forward Bloc), and in Utkal, Jagannath Misra (President, Ganjam DCC) were among the many nationalists arrested in this period. The Madras Government applied the DIR against members of the West Godavari District Congress Committee and Congress Socialist workers in the Guntur district. N.G. Ranga (MLA, Central), the Vice-President of the All India Kisan Sabha, was sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one year and to pay a fine of Rs 500 or to suffer rigorous imprisonment for a further period of six months.¹⁷

The AICC office at Allahabad obtained in May, June and July 1940, a disquieting amount of information about cases of suppression of civil liberties from the Indian Civil Liberties Union at Bombay, letters from the PCCs and the DCCs, and from daily newspapers.¹⁸ In his circular of 13 July, the AICC General Secretary sent to the PCCs a long list of Congressmen and Congress sympathizers in nationalist activity, editors of newspapers, publishers and printers, against whom the DIR was used in the previous weeks.¹⁹ As yet, all-India level top Congress leaders were free to move about and speak, but it was felt that, should the anti-war movement gain ground, those who had consistently opposed co-operation with the British Government on grounds of nationalist policy only and not on grounds of non-violence would soon find it hard to continue nationalist work without trouble of a serious nature with the authorities under the DIR. Mahatma Gandhi, who had partially withdrawn from the Congress leadership in June and July to signify his disapproval of the Wardha statement on non-violence and Delhi-Poona Offer, returned to his accustomed position of policy mentor in August, following the viceregal statement which offered no basis of discussion between the government and the Congress for the formation of a national government.²⁰ The *Harijan* of 1 September carried an article by Gandhi saying:

It is not possible for a large and popular organization like the Congress to be wholly non-violent for the simple reason that all its members cannot have attained the standard level of non-violence. But it is perfectly possible for some of its members who truly understand the implications of pure *ahimsa* and observe it as the law of their life, to lead a successful Satyagraha movement. This truth has been demonstrated so far by the Congress.²¹

The Bombay Resolution of the AICC in September calling upon Gandhi to guide the Congress at this juncture was drafted by Gandhi himself and touched up by Jawaharlal. On both days of the session, 15 and 16

September, Gandhi explained to the AICC his appreciation of the political situation.²² He referred to the arrests of Jayaprakash Narayan and Rammanohar Lohia and observed that it was not satyagraha to sit idle while non-violent Congress workers were being picked away one by one. He was convinced that the Congress was being goaded by the authorities to fight for its existence as a political organization and for the cause it stood for: the moral right of the Indian people to freedom.²³

2. Leaders Court Arrest (October 1940-March 1941)

The provincial Congress committee in Bengal, a province ever in hot political ferment and posing no small problem to Congress party discipline, had sought permission from the Working Committee to launch a satyagraha early in 1940, because the Bengal Government was using the DIR to make even the normal work of Congressmen difficult.²⁴ Leading his Forward Bloc of recalcitrant Congressmen, Subhas Chandra Bose started in July 1940 at Calcutta a 'group satyagraha' for the removal of the Holwell Monument in the vicinity of the Bengal Secretariat building. The Bengal Government arrested Subhas and detained him in jail, even before his first batch of satyagrahis could march towards the hated monument.²⁵

Early in August 1940, leaders of the Congress committees in the United Provinces, including Jawaharlal and Acharya Narendra Deva, were reported to be seriously considering the possibility of launching civil disobedience in these provinces on the issue of an order by the Government of India banning military drills and wearing of distinctive uniform by volunteers organized by political parties.²⁶ The Congress Seva Dal in the United Provinces, the largest and best organized volunteer movement in the country, strongly resented this order.

Jawaharlal carried the matter to the Working Committee meeting at Wardha (18 to 23 August 1940). The Working Committee did not go beyond the adoption of a resolution protesting that the order relating to the volunteer movement was liable to abuse by the authorities, and that it could prevent and hamper the normal activities of non-violent volunteers for social work which Congressmen had organized in the country. By September, Congress Seva Dal members in the United Provinces were defying the ban on drill and uniform, and some of them were courting arrest.²⁷ An Intelligence report of 9 September 1940 from the United Provinces informed the Government of India: 'Should direct action be decided upon later, it appears that the campaign [by Congressmen] will be initiated along the following lines: (1) Boycott of Civil and Criminal Courts, (2) No-rent campaign, (3) Mass refusal to accept currency notes, (4) Non-cooperation with all Government activities particularly in connection with the war.'²⁸

Gandhi and the Working Committee favoured an all-India civil disobedience movement on an issue of an elevating character, something of clear ideological significance, keeping unimpaired the basic demand of the Congress for Indian independence as a foil in the background but never absent from the mind of Congressmen. Gandhi chose to fight in 1940-1 for a moral right, the excellence of which was lost on all but few Indians in that period. He limited the Satyagraha to the assertion of the right of an Indian *qua* man to tell other men in the country not to aid in any war, or in this particular war of the British Government, with men, money and material. The principle of non-violence and its corollary 'no-war' were, for Gandhi, elements of value in his message which should become distinctive strands of the civilization free India should build for herself. 'I know that India has not one mind,' said Gandhi, in his statement issued on the eve of starting the Individual Satyagraha campaign in October 1940:

There is a part of India that is war minded and will learn the art of war through helping the British. The Congress has no desire, therefore, to surround ammunition factories or barracks and prevent people from doing what they like. We want to tell the people of India that if they will win Swaraj through non-violent means they may not cooperate militarily with Britain in the prosecution of the war. This right of preaching against participation in war is being denied to us and we have to fight against the denial. Therefore while that right will be exercised only by those whom I may select for the purpose all other activities of the Congress will continue as before unless the Government interfere with them.²⁹

Gandhi did not wish to offer civil disobedience himself, for his imprisonment, he thought, was likely to cause greater embarrassment to the Government of India than anything else the Congress could do. He wished to remain outside jail to cope with any contingency that might arise in the course of the movement. He exhorted the mass of passive satyagrahis and the prospective active satyagrahis to concentrate on the constructive programme of the Congress, which was another part of the same movement of satyagraha he was leading. There was to be no looking back for him, no rest till the goal was achieved. Yet, 'I myself do not know the next step.'

Gandhi kept the freedom fighters and the Intelligence Bureau of the Government guessing as to the possible transformation, at a suitable time, of the Individual Satyagraha into a mass satyagraha. After the Individual Satyagraha was launched, the Central Intelligence Officer at Bombay sent to Home, New Delhi, a report, dated 21 October 1940, saying:

There is a sense of relief amongst the richer classes and the Intelligentsia owing to the present plan of the Satyagraha which does not favour any

picketing, or coercive methods, or aggressive mass movement. No serious consequences are expected in as much as the movement will be controlled by Mahatma Gandhi and confined to his selected members trained in the strictest discipline. The movement calls for higher notions of spiritual consciousness and religious fervour. On the other hand, some people believe that, like its predecessor, this 'individual satyagraha' started in a small way will turn into a big fight, and Mahatma Gandhi has some secret plans to implement this movement at the proper time. Though disappointed at the lack of the spectacular side of the movement, Congress circles seem to cherish hopes of achieving the desired result under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. . . . Conversations with a friend who is in close touch with Mr M.V. Pakvasa, Bhulabhai Desai and Sardar Patel have revealed that the new phase of individual civil disobedience is a small beginning for a big struggle, the seriousness of which it is very difficult to gauge at the moment. The public has not yet grasped the full implications of the struggle which will be carried on with the utmost determination and soul force. As Mahatma Gandhi has called the movement 'his last satyagraha', it would turn out to be the best demonstration of a non-violent struggle being a powerful weapon in the hands of a subject nation fighting for independence.³⁰

Many Congressmen had suffered imprisonment for the cause of freedom more than once. In the autumn of 1940, their temper was one of excitement, at the prospect of arrest, detention, and another term of rigorous or simple imprisonment. In an article headed 'On the Verge' published in the *National Herald* of 28 September, Jawaharlal said,

For many months past friends and acquaintances come and whisper: Do you know that lists of Congressmen have been prepared for immediate arrest as soon as the signal is given. Every district and every town has such lists, possibly even our village *mandals*. There is list A and list B, or whatever it is called, and it may be, other lists also. All manner of questionnaires are issued confidentially to the district authorities and passed on by them to the smaller officials. Who are the principal Congress workers; what is their status and income; what are their failings? Can they be bought over or influenced? The Seva Dal especially demands attention and must be fully enquired into. Where does the money come from for Congress work, and how is it spent? . . . We have long been used to all this and, anyway, why worry?³¹

On being selected by Gandhi, a satyagrahi had to go to his own Congress committee area, home town or village, and formally notify the magistrate of his intention to break the law and give the date, time and place of his satyagraha. He was not expected to organize demonstrations on the occasion. He was expected to cry, and explain to those present, the slogans: 'Do not give money to the War Fund; do not give men for the war; do not give materials for the war'. A satyagrahi should

suffer, without hatred of the British people and government servants punishing him, the consequence of his civil disobedience. On release from jail, or when not arrested for breaking the law in this respect, a selected satyagrahi should repeat again and again his offering of satyagraha. If the police do not care to arrest him, a selected satyagrahi would become an itinerant preacher of Congress policy and the Congress constructive programme. He should proceed towards Delhi in easy stages on foot, keeping body and soul together by whatever food and shelter people might offer him on the way. He had to remember that under the terms of the Satyagraha Pledge, he could not look to the Congress to support his family and dependants. Minors, unemployed persons or persons depending on others for subsistence, people without a fair record in Congress work, especially in its constructive programme, and those who scoffed at the charkha and khadi, could not hope to get selected by Gandhi for satyagraha.³²

In December 1940, after the Individual Satyagraha had started in earnest, in a moment of exaltation in the course of a conversation with T.R. Deogirkar, President of the Maharashtra PCC, Gandhi was reported to have said: 'I want to prepare who's who. I want to publish a book giving details about the Satyagrahis. I want to show to the Britishers, nay the whole world what the calibre of our Satyagrahis is.' 'They may be few, but must be the best.' The Andhra PCC had sent him full particulars about satyagrahis recommended by them; the Maharashtra PCC could do the same, in drawing up lists for Gandhi's approval. He wanted to know on what pressing conditions a person proposed to offer satyagraha. Individuals with some sort of representative character were the best, for participating in the Individual Satyagraha movement.³³

It was in the representative character of satyagrahis that an organization man could find special political importance in the form of satyagraha of 1940-1. This aspect of it was best explained by Maulana Azad at a public meeting attended by about 5,000 people at Allahabad on 13 December 1940, about three weeks before he was arrested for making 'prejudicial' speeches, 'Unlike previous Satyagrahas it progresses from up downwards.' 'Forty to fifty lakh of four-anna Congress members elect representatives for primary Congress Committees which in turn elect representatives for higher committees. In this way the topmost committee is formed. There could not be fifty lakh members, had the Congress not the sympathy of the people.' 'Satyagraha by the members of the Working Committee and the AICC means Satyagraha by all Congress members.' 'The present Satyagraha will spread from up right down to the village Mandal Committees, the Committees on which the whole structure of the AICC stands.' 'The offering of Satyagraha by the

MLAs and MLCs means the offering of Satyagraha by their constituencies, by the people (who) elected them.'³⁴

Gandhi selected a Congress constructive programme worker, a man after Gandhi's own heart, to inaugurate the civil disobedience movement.³⁵ He was Acharya Vinoba Bhave, then about fifty years of age, greatly respected by the inmates of Gandhi's ashram at Sevagram near Wardha but little known to people outside. Vinoba was an out and out war resister, a strict Gandhian nationalist. He was a scholar of ascetic habits, dedicated to *satya* (truth) and the cause of *Daridranarayan seva* (service to God appearing as the Poor). He was director of the Mahila Ashram in Wardha, and the author of a textbook on *takli* spinning, a subject on which he was an acknowledged expert. Having joined Gandhi's ashram almost at its inception, Vinoba had taken part in every menial activity in it from scavenging to cooking. In formal education he was an undergraduate, having left college during the First World War. He gave himself higher education in Sanskrit; he had studied the Holy Quran in original Arabic. He had driven untouchability and malice from his heart; he believed in communal unity and the necessity of Indian independence. Vinoba, a representative freedom fighter, who had taken part in previous satyagraha campaigns but, being free from political ambition, did not care for publicity for himself. Gandhi had his reasons for inviting Vinoba Bhave to become the first Congressman offering satyagraha in the new form in 1940, to be its historic symbol in the minds of millions of people. In his statement of 15 October 1940 on the first step in the campaign of civil disobedience, Gandhi explained Vinoba's representative character, and added: 'I have discussed with Shri Vinoba various plans so as to avoid all unnecessary friction or risks. The idea is to make all action as strictly non-violent as is humanly possible.' 'How far I shall be able to present an example of unadulterated non-violence remains to be seen.' 'This will perhaps be the last civil disobedience struggle which I shall have conducted. Naturally I would want it to be as flawless as it can be.' 'Let me repeat the issue. On the surface, it is incredibly narrow — the right to preach against war or participation in the present war. Both are matters of conscience for those who hold either view. Both are substantial rights.' When the issue of the struggle was probed deep enough, it was a matter of life and death for the Congress at a crucial moment in its history, said Gandhi. The Congress would vanish if it suppressed itself for fear of consequences or otherwise by ceasing to assert its moral right to preach its principle of non-violence. All would be lost if Congressmen did not act, suffer for the cause, and maintain it against all odds. 'We cannot then win Swaraj through non-violent means.'³⁶

On 17 October 1940, under instruction from Mahatma Gandhi who had already sent to the authorities necessary notice about it, Acharya

Bhave offered his satyagraha by addressing a meeting at Paunar, a village near Wardha. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, Mahadev Desai and about fifty women from the Mahila Ashram at Wardha were among the audience (about 300 persons). The police did not disperse the meeting and allowed Vinoba to make four other anti-war speeches on the following days at places near Wardha. On 21 October, Vinoba was arrested, brought to Wardha, tried under the Defence of India Rules, and sentenced to simple imprisonment for three months, for making prejudicial speeches. What did Vinoba say to which the Government objected? The governor general in a telegram of 27 October 1940 to the Secretary of State said:

Following are some extracts from Vinoba Bhave's speeches. You can see that they are double edged and could be used by the enemy. (1) Government says that German Government is demoniac but our Government is the teacher of such Government. (2) Hitler is said to be a Dictator but he dictates to at least educated people like the Germans. It cannot be believed that educated people will agree to dictation unless they have full faith in their leader. Our Government is on the other hand dictating to 40 crores of ignorant people. (3) Hitler's idea appears to be the destruction of the whole world and the idea of the English also appears to be the same. (4) You should not take part in any war but particularly so in this war, because it is a war of Imperialists. We should destroy all sources of help at their very root for war purposes.³⁷

On the day of Vinoba's arrest, 21 October, an amendment to the Defence of India Rules, published in a Gazette of India Extraordinary, laid it down that the Central Government or the Provincial Government had the power, by an order addressed to printers, publishers or editors collectively or individually, to call for scrutiny, and to censor, prohibit, or regulate, the printing or publishing of any document or class of documents or of any matter relating to a particular subject or class of subjects. The use of any printing press could be regulated or prohibited by the government. On 21 October, the Government of India in the Home Department issued an Order under which government could regulate or prohibit the use of the press directly and indirectly for publicity of satyagraha stories, anti-government or anti-war statements and speeches, these being matters calculated 'to foment opposition to the prosecution of the war to a successful conclusion'.³⁸ Gandhi was obliged to suspend, first temporarily on 25 October 1940 and then as announced on 10 November 1940, for an indefinite period, the weeklies published to carry his messages to the country: *The Harijan*, the *Harijan Bandhu* and the *Sevak*. The District Magistrate at Wardha had directed the editors of these papers to submit to the Chief Press Adviser in Delhi Vinoba's satyagraha news and other matters before publication.³⁹

Who was to offer individual satyagraha, after Vinoba? The Intelligence Bureau, 'the IB', an abbreviation of fearsome suggestion and as widely known as another abbreviation, the DIR, during the Second World War, knew the answer in good time for preventive action by the authorities. They had obtained a copy of a letter dated Sevagram, 24 October 1940, from M.K. Gandhi to J. Nehru, Allahabad. It said:

If you are ready you may now ceremonially declare your civil disobedience. I would suggest your choosing a village for your audience. I do not suppose they will allow you to repeat your speech. They were not ready with their plans so far as Vinoba was concerned. But should they let you free I suggest your following the plans laid down for Vinoba. But if you feel otherwise, you will follow your own course. Only I would like you to give me your programme. You will fix your own date so as to leave me time for announcing the date and place. It may be that they won't let you even fulfil your very first programme. I am prepared for every such step on the part of the Government. Whilst I would make use of every legitimate method of seeking publicity for our programme my reliance is on regulated thought producing its own effect. If this is hard for you to believe, I would ask you to suspend judgment and watch results. I know you will yourself be patient and ask our people on your side to do likewise. I know what strain you are bearing in giving me your loyalty. I prize it beyond measure. I hope it will be found to have been well placed, for it is 'Do or Die'. There is no turning back. Our case is invulnerable. There is no giving in. Only I must be allowed to go my way in demonstrating the power of non-violence when it is unadulterated. Maulana Saheb 'phoned saying I should choose another man for the second Satyagraha. I told him I could not do so if you consented to come in.⁴⁰

The IB was also informed that Mr Nehru was said to have left home for Wardha on 28 October. Jawaharlal was arrested at Chheoki Junction on his way back from Wardha to Allahabad on the evening of 31 October. On 5 November, after hearing for two days three charges related to three speeches made by Jawaharlal on 6 October and 7 October at Laldiggi (Gorakhpur), Deoria and Maharajganj (Gorakhpur District), the District Magistrate of Gorakhpur sentenced the defendant to 16 months RI (Rigorous Imprisonment) on each charge under the DIR.⁴¹

Jawaharlal Nehru's voice was stifled for several months to come, by court action. The government, however, could find no way of effectively suppressing publicity to Jawaharlal's statement made on 3 November 1940 before the court in Gorakhpur Jail. A copy of it was obtained by the AICC headquarters at Allahabad, and a circular addressed to the PCCs was issued the next day, on 4 November, directing them to translate and publish the statement by Pandit Nehru in regional languages. 'It is not likely to be published in the press.'⁴² The *National Herald* of Lucknow, however, published on 5 November, the full text of Jawaharlal's

statement before the court, with a banner heading : 'British Empire on Trial Before World : More powerful forces at work than Courts of law'. There was also a brief message : 'Freedom is in Peril. Defend it with all your might! — Jawaharlal Nehru', printed in facsimile in a box in the middle of the columns. The Government immediately warned the newspaper and declared Jawaharlal's statement of 3 November prejudicial and banned for publication.⁴³

In explaining his prejudicial statements in the Gorakhpur District for which he was being tried by the District Magistrate, Jawaharlal said that he was no friend of the Nazis and the Fascists, even at the time the British Government was appeasing the dictators; his many statements attacking the Anglo-French policy of appeasement were on record. He was no enemy of the British people as such, he merely objected to their imperialism and their Government of India denying freedom to the Indian people and encouraging disruptive and reactionary elements in the country. 'I am convinced that the large majority of the people of England are weary of empire and hunger for a real new order. But we have to deal not with them but their Government.' He was a Congressman, his party could never tolerate a position in which the Indian people were still looked upon as chattel to do the bidding of the British Government, and to suffer without protest the exploitation of their country by imperialists. In this British war against Nazis and Fascists, the Congress had offered to the British Government co-operation on honourable terms. These were spurned by them and the Congress was being goaded to civil disobedience to assert the right of the Indian people to express themselves, 'and to decide for themselves what they should do and what they would not do', in this British war. He was arrested by the police before he had a chance to offer satyagraha under Mahatma Gandhi's instructions. 'If I was chosen or before me Shri Vinoba Bhave was chosen for this purpose [Individual Satyagraha], it was not to give expression to our individual views. We were symbols who spoke the mind of India in the name of India, or at any rate of a vast number of the people of India. As individuals we may have counted for little, but as such symbols and representatives of the Indian people, we counted for a great deal.' People were being moved by elemental urges for freedom, food, and security; history was being moulded by them. 'The future recorder of this history might well say that in the hour of supreme trial, the Government of Britain and the people of Britain failed because they could not adapt themselves to a changing world. He may muse over the fate of empires which have always fallen because of this weakness, and call it destiny.'

At places, Congress committees succeeded in distributing, in cyclo-styled sheets, translations in regional languages of Jawaharlal's stirring speech before the court at Gorakhpur. There was, however, no signifi-

cant demonstration of public feeling on the occasion of Jawaharlal's arrest and trial.⁴⁴ There was a rumour that Mahatma Gandhi was meditating a fast on some public issue; there was a report also that the Congress Working Committee would meet at Wardha on 3 November to review the situation.⁴⁵ The committee met for four days, and on 6 November it resolved that the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly should return to their seats for a brief period to participate in the scheduled debate in the Assembly on a supplementary Finance Bill introduced on 5 November to enable the Government of India to raise for war purposes about five crores of rupees.⁴⁶ Gandhi allayed popular anxiety by announcing on 7 November that he had kept in abeyance his programme of a fast.⁴⁷ By the middle of the month Gandhi was reported to have drawn up a list of about 1,500 satyagrahis from various provinces. About this time, an AICC Circular of 4 November became better known. It said Gandhiji desired that, in case of arrest of Jawaharlal and other leaders, there should be no mass disobedience. 'These instructions [from Gandhiji] state that there is absolutely no objection to spontaneous *hartal* but no attempt should be made to coerce shopkeepers to close their shops and extra precautions should be taken to prevent noisy demonstrations.' As in past movements, Congressmen were expected to show initiative and organize publicity for Congress work. 'About the publicity "blackout" of the Government you must have already known Gandhiji's instructions. He expects each one of us to be walking newspapers distributing reliable news. To this end we must organise a net work of news agencies capable of serving the remotest village.'⁴⁸

The government did not choose to make it a crime to attend satyagraha meetings, or to witness offering of satyagraha meetings, or to witness offering of satyagraha. This helped the 'Walking Newspapers' and other Congressmen to scatter news and ideas of Congress satyagraha.⁴⁹ The principal source of information on satyagraha was the daily press. Nationalist newspapers in English, for instance the *Hindustan Times*, the *National Herald*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, the *Hindusthan Standard*, the *Searchlight*, the *Free Press Journal*, the *Bombay Chronicle*, the *Hindu* and the *Tribune* and several dailies in regional languages, published satyagraha news fairly, without dishonouring seriously a gentlemen's agreement, made in November 1940, between the Government of India and the Editors' Conference, providing for self-imposed restraint and abiding by the advice of Press Advisers regarding the publication of prejudicial reports from time to time.

Gandhi and the AICC General Secretary now found it hard to convey their ideas and instructions to Congressmen and the Country quickly and widely through press agencies.⁵⁰ Congressmen were now obliged to undertake journeys, more frequently perhaps, to Wardha to obtain

Gandhi's instructions and approval of satyagrahi lists. To help Gandhiji with secretarial service, Sadiq Ali, the AICC Office-Secretary, moved with his team from Allahabad to Wardha, which became the headquarters of Acharya Kripalani also till about the end of 1941. From among the members of the Working Committee, Mahatma Gandhi refused permission to Acharya Kripalani, Rajendra Prasad, Syed Mahmud and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, to offer satyagraha, mainly because of their ill-health.⁵¹ Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai Patel were listed second and third respectively in the honour list Gandhi had in mind, but the authorities did not give them a chance to offer satyagraha. The Congress President, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, undertook visits to places like Calcutta, Patna, Allahabad, Karachi and Lahore, besides Wardha, till he too was arrested, on 31 December 1940, by the Government of the United Provinces under instructions from the Home Department in New Delhi.⁵² In spite of her ill-health, Sarojini Naidu succeeded in obtaining Bapu's permission to offer satyagraha in Bombay, though, in this movement, satyagrahis were asked by Gandhi to choose, whenever practicable, small towns or village areas, to demonstrate civil disobedience and vindicate nationalism.

In Ajmer-Merwara, individual satyagraha began in the first week of December 1940; there was no agitation. Early in February 1941, the provincial Congress committee informed the AICC office [which was camping at Wardha since November 1940] that till then there were six arrests and convictions of satyagrahis, and the fines imposed on them by courts amounted to 565 rupees.⁵³

In Assam, satyagraha began in the second week of December 1940. Gopinath Bardoloi, ex-premier, accompanied by A.K. Chanda, deputy leader of the Congress in the Assam Valley, went to Wardha in the last week of November and obtained Gandhi's approval of a list of names. Bardoloi offered satyagraha on 11 December; he was immediately arrested, tried and sentenced to SI (Simple Imprisonment) for one year. By 18 December, Maulavi Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, ex-minister, Bishnu Ram Medhi and a few other MLAs were prosecuted for satyagraha, while Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy, an MLA from Surma Valley, was reported to be preparing to offer civil resistance. Between 11 December 1940 and 8 February 1941, as many as 251 Congressmen offered satyagraha; of these 155 were convicted, and most of the others were let off after arrest. North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Jorhat, Nowgong, Barpeta, Goalpara, Tezpur, Mangaldoi, and Gauhati Districts were providing Congress satyagrahis. Local enthusiasm was aroused by them.⁵⁴

In Bengal, there was scarcely any enthusiasm for the strictly Gandhian movement. Subhas Chandra Bose was released from detention on 5

December 1940. This was interpreted by some as a deliberate move by the ruling coalition party to confound those who hoped for a reconciliation between orthodox and unorthodox Congressmen in Bengal. Gandhi had addressed, on 25 November, a message to Bengal Congressmen: 'I expect great things from Bengal, if all parties sink their differences and work for the common cause.' But members of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party, who supported Sarat Bose, their leader, in defying disciplinary action taken by the All India Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee in October, expelling Sarat Bose from the provincial Parliamentary Party, were unrepentant. Gandhi was no small disciplinarian; the principal rebels in Bengal, Subhas Bose and Sarat Bose, were not ready to apologize to the Congress authorities for indiscipline. Early in December, individual satyagraha was started in some districts of Bengal. On 2 December, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, a strictly Gandhian member of the Congress Working Committee, and Kumar Chandra Jena, President of Midnapore DCC, were arrested and sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment. At Bankura on 9 December, the police made a lathi charge to disperse a students' procession demanding the release of a satyagrahi. The Bengal PCC reported on 8 February 1941 that only 39 Congressmen, out of 100 who had offered satyagraha, were arrested. The Bengal Government followed a policy of ignoring satyagraha by Congressmen who were not important in the eyes of the local authorities. This policy deflated the enthusiasm of many for satyagraha. Out of 71 Congressmen who offered satyagraha in Bengal and Surma Valley in March 1941, only Saroj Ram Chatterjee, Secretary, Balurghat Congress Committee, and four others were arrested. Of the satyagrahis who were let off or not arrested by the police, 41 persons repeatedly offered satyagraha, one of them as many as 13 times in a month.⁵⁵

Civil disobedience in Bihar started with some excitement on 27 November 1940. On the afternoon of that day, at Patna, Sri Krishna Sinha, ex-premier, offered satyagraha, shouting slogans near the Bankipore Maidan. A crowd that had assembled to witness Sinha's satyagraha became violent and roughly handled two police officials, whereupon the police made a lathi charge to disperse the mob. This incident disturbed Gandhi, who sent a telegram to Rajendra Prasad to warn against big demonstration on the occasion of satyagraha. 'Only the authorities should be informed, not the public, of impending resistance.' Rajendra Prasad directed the movement in Bihar according to Gandhi's instructions, and, except for a violent speech by a local Congressman at Arrah after an MLA was arrested for offering satyagraha there early in December, the movement in Bihar remained free from further incidents objectionable to Gandhi and the police. By the end of February 1941, the police had arrested 242 satyagrahis, including 52 MLAs, 3 MLCs, 23 AICC members, and 5 members of the Central Legislative Assembly.

In a report of the last week of February 1941 on the progress of the movement, the Bihar PCC said: 'In some of our districts notably Saran, Patna, Palamau and Sahabad, arrests are not being made and if any arrest is made, Magistrates only sentence to detention till rising of the Court.' Satyagrahis were advised to go on offering satyagraha till they were arrested by the police.⁵⁶

In the Bombay Presidency, the authorities made a preventive arrest of Vallabhbhai Patel on 17 November 1940 at Ahmedabad, before he could offer satyagraha. Brijlal Biyani, President of the Vidarbha Provincial Congress Committee, was arrested at Akola on the same date. Morarji Desai, ex-minister of Bombay, was arrested on 20 November, and B.G. Kher, ex-premier, and D.N. Vandrekar, a leading Congressman, in Bombay on the following day. These arrests were made under Section 129 of the DIR, which empowered the government to detain persons who were acting, or about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the successful prosecution of the war. Similarly, Sarojini Naidu and Bhulabhai Desai, both members of the Congress Working Committee, and Mangaldas Pakvasa, President of the Bombay Legislative Council, were arrested on 1 December. Because of ill-health, the authorities released Sarojini Naidu after ten days of detention; a gesture by the Bombay Government which pleased the people. Sarojini Naidu, however, stayed at Bombay to encourage the satyagraha movement.

Gandhi sent strict instructions to the Maharashtra PCC that satyagrahis should not offer satyagraha at public meetings, and warned the PCC that if there was any trouble, whether created by Congressmen or by the public or by the police, the movement in Maharashtra would be at once suspended. No violent incident occurred, though about the middle of December there were two big meetings, one at Bijapur of 5,000 persons to congratulate a local satyagrahi, another at Ahmednagar of 8,000 persons to witness S.K. Firodia, an MLA and President of Ahmednagar City Municipality, offering satyagraha. Till the end of February 1941, the police arrested 221 satyagrahis.⁵⁷

In the Central Provinces and Berar, Congressmen endeavoured to secure publicity for their satyagraha, and there were a few instances of violent speeches and unruly crowds. Before the movement started, Seth Poonamchand Sambhuchand Ranka, President of the Nagpur PCC, was convicted on 12 November 1940 for an objectionable speech made by him at Tamsar early in October. Pramila Bai Oke, editor of the Marathi bi-weekly *Matri Bhumi*, and a member of the DCC, offered satyagraha in the presence of three to five thousand people at Akola on 21 November; she had distributed a leaflet in the town on the previous day. By the end of November, Pandit Ravishankar Shukla of Raipur, Pandit Dwaraka Prasad Mishra of Jabalpur, C.J. Bharucha of Nagpur, and S.V. Gokhale

of Nagpur were in prison; they were formerly ministers in the Central Provinces. At Jalgaon, a mill-town, a crowd of about 4,000 people yelled abuse and stoned the police, and the police resorted to a lathi-charge, on the night of 25 November, on the occasion of satyagraha by Dr Abdul Hamid Kazi of Yawal. This incident distressed Mahatma Gandhi. We may quote some of Dr Kazi's statements as a specimen of a violent speech: 'Government thinks I am an idiot to court jail after obtaining degree in England. I will prove that I am not.' 'Muslims are not backward to obtain freedom since 1920.' 'The Viceroy gets Rs 31,000 and the Bombay Governor gets Rs 11,000 a month.' 'Eight crores of people in India ate one meal a day; Indians aided the British people in the World War I, and were rewarded by the Rowlatt Acts and Martial Law.' 'Gandhi had withheld this movement for a year.' 'We are with you [the British people] if you give us freedom. We do not love any nation.' 'Germany did not drop bombs on India. You should fight with Germany because she has dropped bombs on your country.'⁵⁸

For a remarkable statement of faith in non-violence made during the Individual Satyagraha movement in the Central Provinces one must turn to the statement made in court by Pyarelal, Gandhi's secretary, who was arrested and sentenced to three months' simple imprisonment for offering satyagraha on 10 December 1940. He pleaded guilty to the charge of prejudicial action under the Defence of India Rules and explained briefly what had compelled him to offer civil disobedience. He was born in the Punjab; his father was then Extra Assistant Commissioner in Delhi. Young Pyarelal had his first experience of war effort during the First World war; he saw how in his village the tahsildar with his retinue used threats and abuse to force important people to contribute money for the war; no one could raise his voice on learning that, in some districts during forced recruiting of soldiers, women were insulted. After the war, Punjab was submitted to martial law. 'My province is famed as martial province in India. But when I saw all this the fame began to stink in my nostrils.' 'The question of violence or non-violence was then before me. But even so I could see that the profession of soldiering was no cure for cowardice. It could not turn us into brave people in front of tyrants.' In 1919, Pyarelal was preparing for his Master of Arts examination from the Government College Lahore, but when Gandhiji started the Non-cooperation movement he gave up worldly ambitions and dedicated himself to the cause of attainment of swaraj by means of non-violence. Gandhi took special pride in sending his valued assistants to offer satyagraha.⁵⁹

In Coorg, early in December 1940, Korana Devayya, Kollimada Karumbayya, Bidanda Kariappa and Pondianda Belliappa, all Congress members of the Coorg Legislative Council, were sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment.⁶⁰ The Delhi PCC reported at the end of

the first week of February 1941, that by that time 39 satyagrahis had been sentenced, and four were under trial, for offering civil resistance.⁶¹ Among those imprisoned was Asaf Ali, a member of the Congress Working Committee and an MLA (Central), who launched the movement in Delhi on 29 November 1940.

The authorities in the Madras Presidency dealt rather severely with Congressmen offering satyagraha. T.S. Rajan, former minister, was arrested on 19 November 1940 at Trichinopoly under section 129 of the DIR; on 25 November, he was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1,000 or, in default, to six months' further imprisonment. T. Prakasam, President of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, was arrested on 26 November and sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment. A similar sentence was passed on C. Rajagopalachari, a member of the Congress Working Committee and ex-premier of the presidency; he was arrested on 3 December. During the week ending on 18 December, 40 Congressmen were arrested and convicted in the presidency; among them were S. Satyamurti, MLA (Central) and ex-Mayor of Madras; Dr P. Subbaroyan, MLA, ex-minister; Mrs Subbaroyan, MLA (Central); V.I. Muniswami Pillai, MLA, ex-minister; and K. Venkataswami, MLA, Deputy President, Madras Legislative Council.⁶² The Tamil Nadu PCC wrote, in a report dated Madras 28 April 1941, that in their Congress committee area, till the time of reporting, a total of 1,580 Congressmen had offered satyagraha, of whom 842 unarrested satyagrahis were proceeding to Delhi. 'The treatment meted out to unarrested Satyagrahis is very harsh. In one place — Vadamadura — the satyagrahis were taken to the police station, beaten well there, and at midnight they were driven out of the station as also out of the town. In most of the cases, satyagrahis are arrested under the Town Nuisance Act — the curious act that is found most useful only in the Madras Presidency.' 'In some places public are warned by Government not to give any sort of help to Satyagrahis. Leaving the Satyagrahis in the middle of the forest at the midnight has become a familiar method of prosecuting the Satyagrahis. Flags are torn out and badges snatched away.' 'Satyagrahis endure all this cheerfully.' It was true, said the report, that poor villagers were coerced to pay for the War Fund; they feared official pinpricks and harassment.⁶³

The Andhra PCC, in their monthly report covering the period from 6 January to 5 February 1941, said that in their 14 districts satyagraha was progressing well. In the number of satyagrahas, 'West Godavari (with 115 persons) gets the first place this month and North Vizagapatam (with 3 persons) the last place. During the month the total amount of fines imposed upon Satyagrahis comes to Rs 53,856.' This amount far exceeded the figures of total amount of fines imposed on the satyagrahis in any other province in India. 'The sentences imposed on individual

satyagrahis varied from one of till the rising of Court to one of eighteen months rigorous imprisonment.' Perfect discipline and a non-violent atmosphere prevailed even when big crowds gathered to see satyagrahis courting arrest. Both the Andhra PCC and the Kerala PCC reported in April 1941 that the police were falsely charging satyagrahis under the Town Nuisance Act of the Madras Presidency.⁶⁴

In the North-West Frontier Province, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was prevented by Gandhi from offering satyagraha. Dr Khan Sahib, the ex-premier, offered satyagraha by uttering anti-war slogans in Peshawar in the second week of December 1940; he was merely removed from the scene to his home without arrest. This procedure was followed by the local authorities in other instances also, till the Government of India advised the provincial government that there should not be any departure, without good reason, from the policy of upholding respect for the DIR.⁶⁵

The removal to prison of all principal leaders by prosecution or detention was the policy adopted by the Government of India and approved by the Secretary of State, to weaken the civil disobedience movement. In the last week of February 1941, the NWF PCC reported that till then in all 20 Congressmen had offered satyagraha and, of these, one was an MLA (Central) and 16 were provincial MLAs (including three ex-ministers). A. Qaiyum Swati, General Secretary of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, and Haji Faqira Khan, MLA, both of Hazara District, were arrested but released after 11 days. Kurshed Ben was arrested at Bannu on 4 December under the Punjab Frontier Crossing Regulation.⁶⁶

In Orissa, the civil disobedience started in the first week of December 1940, and by the middle of the month Biswanath Das, ex-premier, Nityananda Kanungo, ex-revenue minister and eight other MLAs were in prison. Nabakrushna Chowdhury, Harekrishna Mahtab, Loknath Misra, and Mohan Das were among the first satyagrahis. Mohan Das received a sentence of rigorous imprisonment for one year. About 2,000 people, mostly students, gathered to see Sarala Devi offer satyagraha. There were no reports of disturbance in connection with these arrests. By the end of March 1941, as many as 315 satyagrahis were arrested in Orissa.⁶⁷

Between the last week of November 1940 and the end of March 1941, the total number of satyagrahis arrested in Punjab was 352.⁶⁸ Except on five occasions, the offering of satyagraha did not excite crowds into violent moods. At Lahore, early on the night of 28 November 1940, a meeting of 10,000 persons saw Mian Iftikar-ud-Din, MLA, President of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, offer satyagraha. The Mian's speech had many prejudicial statements punishable under the

DIR. Referring to the recruitment of Indians for the British war, he said: 'There was certainly no justification that they should kill anybody on the instigation of another for a nominal pay of Rs 15 p.m.' Because India supplied large number of mercenary soldiers to the British Government, India was responsible for the slavery of Afghanistan, Palestine, Egypt, Iran and Iraq also. He severely attacked the loyalists in the Punjab headed by Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan. 'Even if war continued for a couple of years, as was declared by Churchill, the speaker was sure that the English would become so weak that they would not be able to maintain their hold on India.' 'The present war,' the speaker asserted, 'was nothing but a quarrel for the distribution of usurped territories.' When the Mian was arrested, the crowd became infuriated and raised abusive slogans; one of them hurled a stone which struck the hat of the police chief. Thereupon, the police made a mild lathi charge to disperse the crowd.⁶⁹ This and another similar incident, with an amusing feature added, in the following week at Lahore, obliged Gandhi to suspend, for several weeks, the satyagraha movement in Punjab. It appeared that without obtaining approval of Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Assembly Party in the Punjab, Sardar Sampuran Singh, offered satyagraha by shouting slogans as he emerged from Lajapat Rai Hall. The police arrested him and dispersed by lathi-charge a stone-throwing crowd protesting against the leader's arrest. On being asked at court, by the trying magistrate, Mr Henderson, whether he honestly believed in non-violence, Sardar Sampuran Singh replied in the negative. The magistrate exposed the satyagrahi to further ridicule by sentencing him to a fine of one anna (one-sixteenth of a rupee) and by paying the fine from his own pocket.⁷⁰

In view of many incidents of violence on the minority community in the past months and the assumption, in November 1940, of ministership by Allah Bux, a nationalist Muslim leader of pro-Congress sympathy, Maulana Azad asked Congressmen in Sind to keep away from the satyagraha movement and devote their energy to strengthening the ministry and helping the provincial government in maintaining law and order. Because of the earnestness of Choitram Gidwani and members of the PCC in Sind, who collected a fair list of prospective satyagrahis, it was only after January 1941 that Gandhi agreed to a token movement in the province. The Sind PCC reported to the AICC that 13 Congressmen were satyagrahi prisoners by the end of March 1941.⁷¹

The United Provinces Congress Committee, which had been consistently supporting the cry for civil disobedience raised at Ramgarh, gave a good account of themselves during the Individual Satyagraha movement. Except three cases of rowdyism by students, the satyagraha movement was free from violence, though as many as 6,328 Congressmen were taken prisoners by March 1941.⁷² The Christmas week being

holiday season for many people, Gandhi ordered a brief suspension of the satyagraha movement. By the end of the year, in the United Provinces most of the notable Congressmen had been imprisoned. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, the ex-premier of the province, offered satyagraha on 24 November 1940, at a meeting of 3,000 people at Bhotia Parao, Haldwani, by repeating several times slogans in Hindi which could be translated as follows: 'It is wrong to help the British War effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance.' During his trial, Pandit Pant submitted a written statement explaining his reasons for offering civil disobedience. 'I have been arrested for the breach of one of the Defence of India Rules. These rules are the creation of an irresponsible autocracy, the agents of an alien Government and are utterly lacking in moral and popular sanction.' 'I am solely responsible for what I have done. Yet I do not stand before you merely as an individual. I had the privilege of being duly chosen by our great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, for giving expression to the Congress attitude towards the war in this simple style and I possess a representative capacity.' It was known to all that nationalist India loved democracy and abhorred Nazism and Fascism. In the past months, the Congress had striven hard to reach with the British Government a satisfactory arrangement befitting the honour and dignity of India. The government had ridiculed the restraint shown by the Congress and spurned the Congress offer of co-operation on honourable terms. 'It is proclaimed in the world,' said Pandit Pant, 'that all war effort in this country is voluntary but those who dispute this assertion are not allowed to speak'. Pandit Pant was the most respected nationalist leader in Kumaon, an important army recruiting area.

For publishing a full report of Pandit Pant's trial for satyagraha in Nainital, the police arrested the editor and publisher of *Jagrit Janata*, a local Hindi weekly issued from Haldwani.⁷³

In the week ending 4 December, a large number of meetings were held either to protest against the arrest of satyagrahis or to congratulate individual satyagrahis courting arrest. Dehra Dun gave a big send off to Mahavir Tyagi who proceeded to Kalsi to offer satyagraha. 'From Bareilly the District Magistrate reports the rather anomalous situation of Pt Dwarka Prasad, MLA, destined to be the first satyagrahi, while at the same time his sons are endeavouring to obtain commissions in the army.'⁷⁴ Among the prominent Congressmen arrested in the United Provinces in the week ending on 12 December, in connection with the civil disobedience movement, were Mohan Lal Saksena and Hussain Zaheer in Lucknow, Joginder Singh, the Chief Whip of the Congress Party in the Central Legislative Assembly, who offered satyagraha in Bahraich, R.S. Pandit and Vijayalakshmi Pandit at Allahabad, and

Pandit Sampurnananda at Banaras. 'R.S. Pandit went to see the District Magistrate the day before his arrest to hand over the papers of the Rural Development Association and told him that Mahatma Gandhi's idea was that the people, who prosecuted a war, were not the proper people to arrange a peace and that for this reason Congress people were retiring to jail till after the war.' An exceptionally big meeting of 5,000 people was held at Banaras to congratulate Sampurnananda on his arrest. In this period, arrests of Congressmen were generally made before the satyagraha was performed, but in one or two cases the satyagrahi gave the police the slip. 'The satyagraha of Todar Sing, a Jat MLA, in Aligarh is of some interest, as in the last war he got a *jangi inam* for recruitment and at the beginning of this war was reported to be helping in the recruiting of Jats in the West.'⁷⁵ The Congress movement did not affect recruitment of soldiers from the province. 'The arrest of Mr Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, yesterday [13 December] is likely to be a shrewd blow, as he was responsible for the organization and finance of the extended movement. His arrest caused no sensation, even in Lucknow.'⁷⁶ Sri Prakasa, MLA (Central), President of the PCC, UP, was arrested at Banaras on 8 January 1941; he was sentenced on 11 January to simple imprisonment for one year. At Lucknow, Acharya Narendra Deva, MLA, Acting President, was arrested on 14 January, and also Mohan Lal Gautam, Acting President of the PCC and an MLA. On 18 January 1941, both the leaders were detained without trial.⁷⁷ By 20 February 1941, the number of Congress satyagrahis arrested in the UP rose to 1,495. The number of Congressmen arrested by the police in the United Provinces before the current civil disobedience movement started was 1,019.⁷⁸

The peak period of the Individual Satyagraha movement, marked by the courting of arrest by notable people in the Congress and in public life, was passed by February 1941. Gandhi kept the numbers down and hedged the satyagrahis with so many restrictions that the public did not have many chances of getting excited.⁷⁹ On their part, the Government arrested many star satyagrahis even before they had a chance to offer satyagraha in public as contemplated.⁸⁰ We have noted earlier in this chapter that many Congressmen, especially able organizers and those of extremist views, were arrested by the police obviously as a precautionary administrative measure in many provinces, particularly in the United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, and Bengal, in the period between the Ramgarh Congress and the beginning of the Individual Satyagraha. During the civil disobedience movement, Gandhi and the Congress leaders did not obtain as much publicity as they desired for their point of view. Gandhi's telegrams to England were censored.⁸¹ In England, and in the United States also, news of India's contribution to the war with mercenaries and money made first-class news.⁸² Gandhi's new movement was represented by the British Government spokesmen

as illogical and obstructive to the war effort of the viceroy and his government. Government reports indicate that, except in urban areas where there were politically conscious people, the Individual Satyagraha did not arouse popular interest or enthusiasm.⁸³ Among Congressmen, discipline among the leaders was good;⁸⁴ the middle ranks did not show much willingness to go to jail but they were afraid of losing face by abstaining from enlisting as satyagrahis. Students, mill-workers, Kisans, and Congressmen in the 'Native States' were not invited to participate in this movement.⁸⁵ Rivalry among Congressmen for positions at district or lower level local self-government elected bodies continued, as could be expected among political groups. Enrolment of new members and preparing ground for a Congress victory in future elections were not neglected by passive satyagrahis who remained outside jails. Those who were chosen by Gandhiji and the provincial Congress committees to offer satyagraha on behalf of the Congress, or whom the British *sarkar* put into prison for this and other nationalist work, naturally improved their individual political future. Students, mill-workers, kisans, as well as lakhs of 'passive satyagrahi' Congressmen and Congress sympathizers all over the country made no attempt in 1940-1 to spoil Gandhiji's novel experiment in non-violent civil disobedience. The Intelligence Bureau reports and other administrative correspondence relating to Congress activities of this period now in the National Archives may be conveniently reduced to two findings which were really matters of common knowledge: First, that from the merely administrative point of view, there was no danger of the Indian Empire going out of control; and second, the Congress did not spoil their political future at all, rather improved it, in competition with other political parties, by their seemingly harmless but unending satyagraha conducted by Mr Gandhi, an obstinate old man, who would not see reason in the light of the Defence of India Rules. From the Congress organizational point of view, every event of satyagraha (in places near and far from Wardha, the headquarters of Gandhi and the AICC General Secretary's camp for fourteen months) was an assertion of the spirit of freedom by courting suffering, and a vindication of the all-India national character of the Congress. Anyone who would care to browse in the satyagraha reports from the provincial Congress committees, in the files of the All India Congress Committee General Secretary's office of this period, will be convinced that the Government of India was merely 'political', not factual in asserting that the Congress had lost its all-India national character.

3. 1941 : Token Civil Disobedience

In 1941, the Congress bided its time, maintaining a slow-moving unexciting satyagraha, a token civil disobedience. What saved this period of

Congress history from dullness were Gandhi's statements issued from time to time to defend his policy and to explain the meaning of satyagraha and constructive work for swaraj. Though the publication of several of these statements was delayed by Press Control to defeat, to some extent, their immediate purpose of keeping up the morale of Congressmen, they added substantially to the Gandhian legacy to the Congress and the nation.

'This is a struggle which has no ending except in success,' declared Gandhi in a statement issued from Sevagram on 10 January 1941, instructing civil resisters to pay willingly, if they had the ability to pay, fines imposed by magistrates. He asked his countrymen to remember that a Government would always take advantage of weaknesses in human nature.⁸⁶ On 11 January, Gandhi issued an appeal to the people to resolve afresh upon the forthcoming Independence Day's purpose and strive for the economic freedom of the half-starved millions, for 'Swaraj based on non-violence does not mean mere transfer of power.'⁸⁷ The Independence Day Pledge prescribed for 1941 had an extra paragraph: 'In view of the fact that Individual Civil Disobedience has already commenced and that a large number of Congressmen have already been imprisoned all over India, it becomes the special duty of every Indian to concentrate with redoubled zeal on the constructive programme, without the fulfilment of which no civil disobedience, mass or individual, can help us to win and retain Swaraj.'⁸⁸

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's arrest, on the New Year's eve, led Gandhi to assume, for the period of the president's imprisonment, the responsibility of instructing Congressmen on organizational matters also. 'Every acting President in a province must be approved by me.'⁸⁹ No Congress elections were to be held in the emergency period. Such instructions from Gandhi were not strange, because all Congress committees were Satyagraha committees and Gandhi was their supreme guide. 'My intention not to court arrest abides but the rulers may have a different plan.' He believed that this satyagraha would not really end till the European struggle ended. 'For me there is no turning back, whether I have many or very few Satyagrahis. I would far rather be regarded as a fool but strong, than as a knave and a coward. Though the whole world may repudiate my claim, I must repeat that the struggle is God-guided.'⁹⁰ Like many other men in history, Gandhi held that, acting through human agency, God did guide humanity.⁹¹

The publication of Gandhi's statements in January on the payment of fines by satyagrahis and the continuance of civil disobedience after Maulana Azad's arrest was stopped by the press Adviser. On 28 January, Gandhi appealed to the press to assert its freedom by publishing all the satyagraha news fully. 'It is false and cruel to suggest that

I could have anything in common with Nazism or Facism because I happen to oppose imperialism.'⁹² In February, Gandhi made a reply to *The Times of India's* criticism of his policy of non-violence. 'In spite of your disbelief I must adhere to my faith in the possibility of the most debased human nature to respond to non-violence.' He would apply non-violence to save the country from Nazi invasion and British imperialism equally. Hitler represented, in Gandhi's view, a spirit of violence which feeds on violent reaction made to it; the only way to sterilize that spirit was non-violence. Commenting on the suggestion made by *The Times of India* that his demand for free speech was a device for squeezing political concessions from the British Government in war time, Gandhi wrote:

There would be nothing politically wrong if political concessions were demanded even at the point of civil disobedience. But it is a matter of public knowledge that the Poona resolution had lapsed. And in so far as I am concerned, it remains lapsed so long as the war lasts. Civil disobedience would certainly be withdrawn if free speech is genuinely recognised and the status quo restored. I never stated during previous movements that they were likely to be long drawn out. But I have done so this time because I believe that there can be no settlement with the Congress short of complete independence during the pendency of the war, for the simple reason that the Congress cannot commit itself to active help in the war with men and money. That would mean a reversal of the policy of non-violence which the Congress has pursued for the last twenty years. And independence cannot come through any settlement while the war lasts.⁹³

This statement, that there could be no settlement with the British Government short of Independence created consternation among some Congressmen. It obliged Gandhi to issue from Sevagram on 6 March, after a brief visit to Allahabad, a statement to announce that, when the time for a settlement with the British came, the Working Committee would decide what should be the terms of the settlement, 'Meanwhile let every one whether Congressmen or others be guided by the Bombay resolution and not by my interpretation.'⁹⁴

In March 1941, the AICC office camping at Wardha estimated that approximately 11,000 Congressmen were satyagrahi prisoners. On Congressmen convicted for satyagraha, the trying magistrates had often imposed heavy fines; in total, fines amounted to over two lakhs of rupees.⁹⁵ Though for different reasons, it suited both Gandhi and the government to keep down the number of satyagrahi prisoners. Questions were asked in Parliament about the satyagraha movement and the number of satyagrahi prisoners. The government did not wish to appear unduly repressive, with too many political prisoners already in jail. After the Congress notables and workers considered important were put

behind the bars, the local authorities ignored wherever convenient fresh and harmless satyagrahis.⁹⁶ The AICC office issued on 14 March a circular to the PCCs to say that unarrested satyagrahis might do house to house propaganda of Congress policies but there should be no picketing. Satyagrahis should not complain of police fetters and handcuffs. Satyagrahi prisoners might refuse food in jail only if it was unwholesome or uneatable. Satyagrahis in the Madras Presidency were harassed and humiliated by the local authorities using the Town Nuisance Act falsely for punishing disobedience to the British Government. When charged under the Town Nuisance Act, satyagrahis might not offer any defence, but they might plead 'not guilty' to the nuisance charge, said the circular instructions.⁹⁷

Gandhi's rule of selection of satyagrahis by merit in constructive work distressed numerous candidates who had little taste for the insipid and laborious rural reconstruction programme. In May 1941, out of 1,072 names recommended by the Maharashtra PCC in their third list, Gandhi selected only 193 for offering satyagraha. 'This permission business seems to be unduly delayed, and the satyagrahis are thus put to much inconvenience.' To this complaint made by Sri Gosavi, President of the Maharashtra PCC, Gandhi explained that the exigencies of the evolving movement led him to introduce new and harder conditions of preliminary test.

I propose to introduce a change in the technique about the passing of these lists of Satyagrahis. From the date on which the name of prospective satyagrahi is forwarded to me for sanction by a PCC, the satyagrahi concerned has to stop his private activities and has to devote himself wholly to the working out of one or more of the items of the thirteenfold constructive programme, which expression is to be understood in the widest sense as explained in my article headed 'Implications of constructive programme' in the issue of *Harijan* dated the 18th of August 1940. Every prospective Satyagrahi is expected to keep a Log-Book (or Diary) in which he will daily enter the work done during the course of the day and the Log-Book shall be submitted to me through the PCC concerned at stated intervals, say fortnightly or monthly. After going through the Diaries I shall grant permission for Satyagraha to deserving persons.

Gandhi was keen on the quality of satyagrahis; their number was less important in the special campaign he was conducting. 'Moreover while so many satyagrahis are wandering about, I am anxious not to add to the list of wanderers.' When satyagrahis came out of jail, the PCC chiefs were expected to ask them to repeat satyagraha. 'Deep down in me there is a feeling that the struggle will become progressively fiercer and we must pass through all such trials.' Regarding other aspects of Congress policy, Gandhi approved of developing a volunteer organization

on strictly non-violent principles. Such a volunteer organization could be (like the All India Spinners' Association) an allied institution but not a part of a provincial Congress committee. Under the circumstances, the PCCs were not obliged to make an enrolment drive, but applicants for Congress membership were to be enrolled. On the registration of voters to the legislatures, which lists were then under preparation, Gandhi's instruction was clear: 'The Congress must pay full attention to this work. Congress may not ignore it.'⁹⁸

For a shrewd appreciation of satyagrahis made by a non-official British observer, one may turn to the following extract from a correspondent of the Director General of Information, Simla, forwarded to the Home Department at New Delhi on 2 May 1941:

Now as regards the attitude of the Indians I have met towards the satyagraha movement, the general impression appears to be that most of those in prison are there, not because they had any real interest in shouting anti-war slogans, but because it was essential for their political future to obey the orders which they received. I was recently told of one man, who performed satyagraha for no other reason than that at the time of the formation of the last Congress ministry he was refused office on the ground that he had never been in jail and was therefore not qualified for office.' 'On the other hand the average Indian appears to be easily moved to sympathy by any form of self-denial or martyrdom, even if for rather impracticable ends, and this sympathy is apt to be enhanced by factors which may appear rather ridiculous. For instance, I visited a mill-owner in a small town on the day his brother had been convicted for satyagraha. The sole topic of conversation was, not that he had been sentenced, which was regarded as quite in the course of things, but that the accused had expected to receive a sentence in A class, because the Sub-Collector trying him was an old friend of his, while much to his surprise he had only received B class.'⁹⁹

Government reports about the Individual Satyagraha movement in the country indicate nothing which could lead the European members of the Civil Service to doubt the habitual loyalty and morale of the many thousands of Indians employed in government services. A report of January 1941 from the United Provinces, where satyagrahis were largest in number, said that the morale of the government servants was good, and the spirit of the police was excellent, under the Section 93 conditions in which the governor ruled unimpeded by popular ministers.¹⁰⁰ After noticing that the Congress Socialist Party, the Ahrars, as well as members of the Jama'iat-ul-Ulema were declaring themselves for satyagraha, the report proceeded to observe: 'The underlying impression is that Congress by the Satyagraha Campaign and the enlistment of public sympathy thereby, will secure all public support when the time comes for fresh elections. Even the Hindu Mahasabha is swayed by this feeling

and threatens direct action.' 'Meanwhile the extremist parties baulked of opportunities for drastic action by the discipline imposed by Gandhi and unable to take any action on their own accord for lack of support and funds, are feeling about for allies.' Reports from other provinces also indicate that though the masses were not drawn into the movement the 'sacrifices' of the Congress leaders for the cause of independence of the country aroused public sympathy and restored the prestige of Congressmen which was at a rather low ebb before the current civil disobedience movement began.¹⁰¹ The youthful Congress Socialist leaders in Bombay who were telling students that the movement was bound to become a mass movement were proved wrong in the event in 1940-1; Gandhi gave the students no opportunity of participation in these years.¹⁰²

The satyagraha produced little administrative embarrassment to the government. Recruitment in the Punjab, the North Western Provinces, the United Provinces and other areas remained unaffected. Government spending on the enlarged defence establishment, purchase, and production of various supplies for war, created many more jobs for lakhs of unemployed people in urban areas.¹⁰³ As could be expected, industry and business flourished and profiteers multiplied, with increased government spending on the war effort. Contributions to the War Fund rose steadily.¹⁰⁴ The hardships of sugar-cane growers and jute growers did not have repercussions on the law and order situation.¹⁰⁵ Prices rose and this caused hardship for the salaried classes, and the intelligentsia and the press complained of extraordinary taxes, control of supplies, rationing, restrictions put on labour and technical men, control of the press, price control, declarations of special areas as prohibited zones, commandeering of resources and the power of the bureaucracy, and the DIR, and similar wartime measures and innovations and changes. But, from a mere administrative civil servant's point of view, India was in no danger of going out of British control. The administration worked smoothly in the former 'Congress provinces'. The food situation was on the whole favourable in 1941; kisan and industrial workers were comparatively content.¹⁰⁶ There was no question of disaffection or discontent among the Indian army and the police. The governors, the governor general, and the Secretary of State for India, made speeches to say what 'sensible Indians' were doing, and should do, to help Great Britain in the war.¹⁰⁷

After the Congress declined to accept his August offer, Linlithgow did not run after the Congress for a political settlement; the political deadlock was attributed mainly to the inability of the principal elements in India's national life to come to an agreement, implying the intransigence of the Congress.¹⁰⁸ After Gandhi gave the signal for the Individual Civil Disobedience movement in October 1940, with their control of news from India and the method of 'Press advice', the British Government

could depict Gandhi and the Congress as impediments to Allied victory.¹⁰⁹ News of the repression of nationalists crying for independence, and of Gandhi's statements explaining his own and the Congress viewpoints on the Indian situation, could not be fully published in England and America.¹¹⁰

Jinnah constantly reminded Gandhi and the Congress that the road to Independent India lay through Pakistan.¹¹¹ The Hindu Mahasabha called on the Hindus to join the armed forces in large numbers and help the war effort; the Mahasabha as well as the Liberals would have been satisfied with something less than a promise of complete independence for India.¹¹² Both the Mahasabha and the Liberals desired, as the Congress did, some sort of 'national' government for India. The Liberals appeared pro-Congress, and called for an understanding between Gandhi and Jinnah, but they could not discover any basis of understanding.¹¹³ The Hindu-Muslim communal riots in 1941 in Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Bihar Sharif, Kanpur, Bhiwani (Punjab) and other places, were generally viewed by Hindus as 'Pakistan riots'.¹¹⁴ These riots greatly distressed Congressman, wedded to non-violence. A senior Congressman, K.M. Munshi, formerly Law and Order Minister in the Congress ministry in Bombay decided to leave the Congress in June 1941.¹¹⁵ He started a campaign for Akhand Hindustan (United India). Not many Congressmen left the Congress to follow Munshi, because Gandhi issued a timely statement to the country to say that Munshi had left the Congress because he had no faith in non-violence, but that those who had faith in non-violence but only found it impossible to implement it under the circumstances should remain in the Congress.¹¹⁶ Gandhi blamed the British Government for its failure to protect thousands of innocent people, both Hindus and Muslims, from *goondas*, and for deliberately encouraging the evil of communalism in Indian politics.¹¹⁷

Linlithgow took a step in July 1941 to 'Indianize' the Governor-General's Executive Council, by appointing competent and loyal Indians to five new seats created and two other seats in which vacancies would occur, in about two months, when two of the old members (both Indians) would take up new appointments.¹¹⁸ For the first time, Indians outnumbered Englishmen in the council, but the governor-general was the master of his council and the ruler of India. The Indian Empire was not liberalized, and the direct control of the English members of the Indian Civil Service in the departments of Defence, Home and Finance, and their indirect control over less important departments presided over by Indian nominees was not reduced. A communique issued by the Government of India from Simla on 21 July announced the expansion of the viceroy's council and the constitution, with about 30 members of a National Defence Council for India.¹¹⁹ Interviewed at Wardha on 22 July,

Gandhi observed that changes in the viceroy's council did not affect the stand taken by the Congress, nor did it meet the Congress demand for a national government.

An AICC circular, dated Sevagram, Wardha, 27 July 1941, to all the PCCs, said that civil disobedience must continue to be the first concern of all Congressmen. It reviewed the progress of Satyagraha:

The individual civil disobedience movement has been going on for about ten months now. In spite of some irregularities here and there, Gandhiji has on the whole received cooperation from the provinces and the movement has conducted itself with admirable restraint and discipline. There has been some regulation of the speed of the movement from time to time but in its essentials it has remained the same.¹²⁰

For a sample of detailed and interesting Home Department information report on satyagraha in this period, one may notice a report from the United Provinces for the week ending on 9 August 1941, on Congress activities. J.B. Kripalani had arrived in Allahabad to try to revive the movement. Few meetings, with negligible attendance (at Azamgarh, Banaras, Ghazipur) were held by Congressmen. The City Congress Office in Gonda was searched and a number of papers seized; at Banaras, the Congress Office was raided. Everything was now quiet in Agra Jail; in Moradabad, one prematurely released satyagrahi, a woman, had to be arrested; in Ghazipur, a few batches of three men consisting of released or unarrested satyagrahis were moving about, and the leader of one such batch, which had been particularly active, was to be arrested. At other places, ignored and released satyagrahis gave practically no trouble. In Jhansi, women satyagrahis were ignored; 28 satyagrahis were ignored in 12 districts; the Lalitpore police (Jhansi) arrested 21 ignored satyagrahis from the Central Provinces, but the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police decided that in future these people would not be arrested unless they made a nuisance of themselves. Arrest of satyagrahis was made only in six districts and the total number of arrests was only 10 (four in Garhwal, two in Ghazipur, and one each in Muzzaffarnagar, Pilibit, Farrukhabad and Budaun). 'In Muttra one young man was prevented from offering satyagraha by his father who took him away by force.' The total number of persons so far arrested under rule 129 of the DIR was 547; the total number of Congress organizers arrested during the week was seven in five districts. In total, 38 persons (against 59 in the previous week) offered satyagraha during this week. In Kanpur, the second satyagraha camp ended in a meeting attended by only 30 people. 'In Allahabad although accommodation had been provided for 32 people in the widely advertised training camp for unarrested satyagrahis, only eight actually joined and three left after four days.'¹²¹

From about June to December 1941, the developments in the Second World War, and their repercussions on the Indian scene because of India's British connection, weighed heavily in the councils of Congressmen and prompted them towards a reorientation of Congress policy. War news appeared far more important than satyagraha or any other Indian political news, after the German invasion of Russia began on 22 June 1941.¹²² Attacking on a front of two thousand miles from the White to the Black Sea, the Germans were in Riga and Smolensk in July. They were practically masters of the Ukraine in August, and starting their siege of the city of Leningrad in September. In October, the Germans laid siege to Moscow in the north, and entered the Crimea on the Black Sea front. In November, they were heading towards the Caucasus, across which lay Iran and the historic routes of the migration of peoples and predator armies from the Central Asian mountains to the Tigris-Euphrates valley in Iraq and to the Indus Valley in India. British Imperial armies had occupied strategic points in Iraq in May 1941, in reply to the German occupation of Yugoslavia, Greece and Crete in April-May. Great Britain and Soviet Russia concluded on 13 July 1941 a pact promising mutual aid. In the last week of August, British troops occupied southern Iran and Russian troops occupied northern Iran. The war seemed to be approaching the Hindukush. Pro-British and pro-Russian sympathy grew stronger among the right-wing Moderates, and the left-wing Socialists respectively. Indians in general admired the heroic resistance of the British and the Russian people to the German bid for the mastery of Europe.¹²³

Nationalist Indians were hoping for a change in the British Government's attitude towards Indian aspirations, following a Joint Statement issued on 14 August 1941, marking the meetings of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill aboard warships anchored off the coast of Newfoundland. With the passing in March 1941 of the Lend-Lease Act by the United States Congress, America had declared that the defence of Great Britain was vital to the security of the United States. Now, with 'the Atlantic Charter' (as the Roosevelt-Churchill Joint Statement of August 1941, was later called) it appeared that America and England had certain peace aims in common.¹²⁴ In this eight-point charter, the third point read as follows: 'They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live and they wish to see Sovereign rights and Self-Government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.' Whatever hopes for a new deal to India were kindled in Indian breasts by the Atlantic Charter, and by the reports that the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain, Clement Attlee, had said that the Charter was meant to be of universal application,¹²⁵ appeared untenable, after Prime Minister Churchill made a speech, on 9 September

1941, in the House of Commons, to explain the meaning of the Charter:

At the Atlantic meeting, we had in mind primarily the extension of the sovereignty, Self-Government and national life of the States and nations of Europe now under Nazi yoke and the principles which would govern any alteration in territorial boundaries of countries which may have to be made. That is a quite separate problem from the progressive evolution of self-governing institutions in regions whose peoples owe allegiance to the British Crown. We have made declarations on these matters which are complete in themselves, free from ambiguity and related to the conditions and circumstances of the territories and peoples affected. They will be found to be entirely in harmony with the conception of freedom and justice which inspired the joint declaration.¹²⁶

This speech seemed to imply that the British Empire was no concern of the President of the United States in fashioning the peace aims declared in the Charter, and that India and other countries under British rule must look to Great Britain only for freedom and justice.¹²⁷ There was 'laughter in the House' when, in the Central Legislative Assembly at New Delhi, Madhav Srihari Aney, one of Linlithgow's new Executive Councillors, was asked by Sardar Sant Singh: 'Does it [the Atlantic Charter] mean that if Hitler overruns India, the Atlantic Charter will apply?' There was 'loud laughter' when, in reply to Sir Henry Gidney's intervention: 'If the Atlantic Charter applies to India, what part of India would it apply to?' Sardar Sant Singh replied: 'Anglo-India'.¹²⁸

The attitude of senior Congressmen towards the Atlantic Charter was reflected in Acharya Kripalani's comment on it: 'The eight points are quite general and vague.' 'The test of a declaration is not words but deeds. Nothing has since happened in India to indicate a change of attitude on the part of the Government. Neither imperial minds nor imperial aims change suddenly.'¹²⁹ Kripalani was a firm supporter of Mahatma Gandhi's policy of token satyagraha and biding time, awaiting changes in the political situation. The Congress did maintain its image of the largest nationalist party struggling non-violently to assert India's moral right to freedom. Early in September 1941, Kripalani was reported to have said in Bombay that the Congress made no error of judgement, nor did it desert the country, in launching the Individual Satyagraha Movement. 'People today may not recognize it, but history will record that Mahatma Gandhi's action was the greatest stroke of genius.'¹³⁰ He held that the movement was going according to plan.¹³¹

By this time, pressure began to build up within the Congress, principally among Congressmen in Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Bengal, and Punjab, for a reorientation of Congress policy and a return to the legislatures in the provinces and at the centre, a form of activity in which many senior

Congressmen excelled.¹³² Being lawyers of experience and eloquence, whether in office or in opposition, Congressmen could shine as members of legislatures not only in the 'Congress provinces' but in other provinces also. At the Centre, Congress MLAs were brilliant and weighty enough to make matters uncomfortable for the government benches. Those who believed that independence would come and should be accepted in instalments of political concessions to nationalists were supporters of the demand for returning to parliamentary activity. In September 1941, seven members of the Orissa Congress Assembly Party seceded from the party, and led by Pandit Godavaris Misra began negotiations with other groups in the Assembly to form a coalition ministry in the state.¹³³ In the same month, A.K. Fazlul Huq, the Chief Minister of Bengal, who resented Jinnah's directive to him not to join the National Defence Council set up by Linlithgow in July, declared that 'the genius of the Bengali race revolts against autocracy' and, after resigning from the League's Working Committee and the League's Council, proceeded to work towards a coalition ministry representing practically all groups, including orthodox and unorthodox Congress members, in the Bengal Assembly.¹³⁴ In the middle of September, Alla Bux, Premier of Sind, and R.K. Sidhwa, Leader of the Sind Congress Assembly Party, discussed with Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, and Kripalani, the situation in Sind, especially Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's telegram from prison, sent towards the end of August, that it was inadvisable on the part of the Sind Congress to demand Alla Bux's resignation from Linlithgow's National Defence Council.¹³⁵ Gandhi advised the Sind leaders to abide by Maulana Azad's instructions. On 16 September, the Bombay Government ordered, on medical grounds, the release of Bhulabhai J. Desai, a member of the Congress Working Committee and the Leader of the Congress Assembly Party in the Central Assembly.¹³⁶ Bhulabhai and Rajagopalachari (reputed as the ablest of ex-premiers) and S. Satyamurti, the Deputy Leader of the Congress Assembly Party at the Centre, favoured a return by the Congress to the Parliamentary programme.¹³⁷ In October, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, the Premier of Punjab, described Churchill's September statement on the meaning of the Atlantic Charter as 'the biggest rebuff India has ever received', and declared that it was the most opportune time for all parties in the country to present 'a united front' in demanding for India the status of full and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth. On 20 October, the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee decided that the Congress Assembly Party members should attend, at a suitable time, for only one day the Central Assembly session, to enable the members to continue their membership of the Assembly.¹³⁸ By the end of the month, it was clear that MLAs generally, at the Centre, in the 'Congress Provinces', and also in the 'non-Congress provinces' of Bengal, Assam, the Punjab, and

Sind, would be happy to return to the parliamentary programme. Among the leftists, the Congress Socialists, about ninety per cent of whom were in jail in October 1941, were not satisfied with the policy of Individual Satyagraha; they consistently held, in 1940 and 1941, that the Congress should have called for countrywide mass non-cooperation against the British Government. Jayaprakash Narayan, the Congress Socialist leader, who was a security prisoner in the notorious Deoli Camp, tried to pass to his wife, Prabhavati Devi, at an interview, a letter describing 'plans to consolidate the position of the Congress Socialist Party by winning over important members of the terrorist organisations known as the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Hindustan Republican Socialist Association and by isolating the Communist Party'. This was revealed in a communique issued by the Government of India from New Delhi on 16 October 1941. On the affair of Jayaprakash's letter, Gandhi issued a statement reminding people that intrigue, terrorism, deceit, violence and war were methods of national struggle disapproved by him but Jayaprakash was trained in America, and in English history books men who resorted to these methods for national causes, Clive and Warren Hastings for example, were usually called heroes.¹³⁹

Till the end of 1941, probably till about the summer of 1942, Gandhi firmly held the view that mass action for independence would not come before the war ended; meanwhile, the Congress should slowly but steadily feed the fire of national aspiration by two other means: the Constructive Programme and the Individual Satyagraha Movement. In a statement headed 'Our Struggle — A Review', which he issued on 28 October 1941, Gandhi said that several leaders who had been discharged from prison had met him to discuss the correctness of the Bombay Resolution and the Individual Satyagraha Movement.

Complaints reach me that there is marked deterioration in enthusiasm; that fewer people are coming forward now than before; that those who are discharged are not seeking imprisonment again; that there is no discipline among many satyagrahi prisoners some of whom have no notion of non-violence or truth; that the treatment of C class prisoners is inhuman in that the food given is bad in quality and deficient in balance. The result is that the majority of prisoners have suffered in health, making it impossible for many on discharge to seek imprisonment again without adequate rest and repair. There are too many complaints about want of newspaper, books and proper sanitation; that the policy of non-embarrassment is unintelligible, as the rulers themselves do not appreciate it, and the fight therefore should be intensified without regard to embarrassment. That there is no life left in the Congress — there are no meetings, there are no demonstrations, no other activity, and that there should be a change of policy and programme even resulting in the resumption of full parliamentary programme

including ministries, i.e. reversion to the Poona Offer with suitable modification.

Having made this accurate summary of the arguments and viewpoints of the critics of Individual Satyagraha, Gandhi gave the following reasons for maintaining the movement he had been leading for the past one year. In the existing situation of the war in Europe, communal feeling and party contention, and the political atmosphere in India (factors Gandhi left to his readers to understand without mentioning them), a policy of mass satyagraha by the Congress would be naked embarrassment to the British people and an invitation to civil war in which Indians would fight violently with other Indians. 'There is neither warrant nor atmosphere for mass action.' Gandhi held that he was conducting the satyagraha in the name and for the sake of Congressmen who understood the meaning of non-violence and the satyagraha movement. Not all Congressmen could be expected to meet the requirements of the form of struggle he was conducting. Vinoba Bhave went in jail within 72 hours of his discharge; not all discharged satyagrahis could possibly repeat satyagraha at such a short interval, but all could take up suitable work under the Constructive Programme and thereby contribute to the struggle for freedom. 'In former Civil Disobedience the occasion had not come to send the same resisters to jail again and again. In the present one it is inevitable. Any other course would reduce the struggle to be a farce.' The treatment of C class prisoners was inhuman indeed, but satyagraha being a process of silent conversion, a satyagrahi could not stipulate conditions of life in prison. As to the principle of non-embarrassment of the British people in their current struggle, it should be respected; it was a part of the Bombay Resolution of the Congress. 'I do not share the belief that there is no life left in the Congress.' Ample scope for meetings, demonstrations, and exhibitions remained with Congressmen who were engaged in the Constructive Programme. 'Things are going according to Plan.' Parliamentary activity had been almost stopped, and in places Congress members of local boards had been withdrawn from board activity. 'Let it not be forgotten that this is expected to be a fight to the finish.' 'It does not matter if the number [of satyagrahis] is reduced to ten or two. The two will represent the whole Congress,' said Gandhi.¹⁴⁰ Non-violence required great patience and heroic inner strength to be praiseworthy; this was the sum of Gandhi's teaching in 1941.

4. Bardoli Decisions, December 1941

At the end of 1941, a reversal of the policy of the Delhi-Poona Offer of 1940 was encouraged by the British Government's conciliatory measure in November 1941, of releasing from prison Congress satyagrahi

prisoners; soon afterwards, the entry of Japan into the Second World War and her sensational successes against Anglo-American forces in the Pacific obliged the Congress leaders to think in terms of policies other than Individual Civil Disobedience.

From about July 1941, with the United States freezing, by a presidential decree, Japanese credits in America, war clouds loomed menacingly over the Pacific. The American president warned Japan, in August, that any further policy of military domination in Asia by Japan could lead to war with America; this was followed by the British prime minister's warning to Japan that, if negotiations between the United States and Japan failed, Great Britain would go to the support of America in the Pacific. Prince Fummumaro Konoye resigned and was replaced by a pro-Axis general, Hideki Tojo, as the Premier of Japan, in October. The British Government reopened the Burma Road, the main route by which the Chinese Nationalist armies fighting Japan could receive military supplies from the West.

Two pro-Congress nationalists, Madhav Srihari Aney and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, nominated by Linlithgow to his Executive Council in July in the 'Indianizing' process, assumed office as councillors in October. Behind the scenes, all the Indian members and two of the European members of the council supported a proposal that the Government should improve the political situation in India by releasing from prison all the Congress satyagrahis. Newspapers in India and in England, including *The Times* of London, called for a timely step by the Indian authorities to conciliate moderate and liberal nationalist opinion by freeing Congressmen whose disobedience to the British rule had been token or symbolic. Labour members in Parliament were critical of the Government's do-nothing policy. The Prime Minister held firmly to his interpretation of the Atlantic Charter in regard to India and other parts of the British empire, but, on Linlithgow's insistence, relented on the point of freeing the civil disobedience prisoners.¹⁴¹ The government had already adopted measures to release many satyagrahis and was following a policy of not arresting unimportant Congressmen indulging in civil disobedience. On 1 July 1941, there were 12,129 Civil Disobedience prisoners, among whom there were 28 ex-ministers and 290 members of the provincial legislatures.¹⁴² On 1 October 1941, there were 6,148 prisoners convicted or detained in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement, out of a total of 7,216 prisoners under all the various provisions of the Defence of India Rules.¹⁴³ Between July and the end of October, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhulabhai Desai, Narendra Deva, B.G. Kher and Morarji Desai were released. By November, the authorities in the United Provinces, who had arrested the largest number of satyagrahis, started releasing those who had been arrested merely for

giving notice to the local magistrate of their intention to offer satyagraha by shouting slogans and the like. The High Courts of Lahore and Allahabad held that the giving of notice of an intention to break law was no offence.¹⁴⁴ Many satyagrahis were convicted for offences which were merely technical.

In the Central Legislative Assembly at New Delhi, N.M. Joshi, a respected labour leader, moved a resolution on 18 November that steps be taken in agreement with the provincial governments for the immediate release of political prisoners and detenues held in connection with the satyagraha or other political movements, kisan or labour, Communist or revolutionary. Joshi told the Assembly that he did not expect Gandhiji to approve of the release of Congress satyagrahis proposed in the resolution, but people would appreciate a government order to this effect. The Home Member, Reginald Maxwell, defended the Government policy towards satyagrahis, but appeared willing to review the question.¹⁴⁵ On 29 November, the American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, informed the British ambassador that diplomatic conversations between the United States and Japan had practically broken down. Large numbers of Indian troops were already in Singapore. On 3 December, a communique issued from New Delhi said: 'The Government of India, confident in the determination of all responsible opinion in India to support the war effort until victory is secured, have reached the conclusion that these civil disobedience prisoners, whose offences have been formal or symbolic in character, can be set free.' The government hoped that before the end of the year all such satyagrahi prisoners would be freed by the local authorities. With these prisoners would be released Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also.¹⁴⁶

Jawaharlal's mood on being released from jail, after 398 days in prison, could be gathered from a statement he issued on 5 December from Lucknow: 'The call of India continues to resound in our ears and tingle the blood in our veins.'¹⁴⁷ Maulana Azad came out of jail this time with a sense of humiliation, without any feeling of having even partially achieved something. He called a meeting of the Working Committee, and in course of an interview at Calcutta soon after his release announced his view that, should Japan invade India, Indians should take up the sword to defend their country. He added: 'We can do so only if the bonds which shackle our hands and feet are removed. How can we fight if our hands and feet are tied.'¹⁴⁸ The release of political prisoners made no difference in Gandhi's personal attitude towards the government and the war; he would, however, not stand in the way of others working for a reorientation of the Congress policy. 'The Working Committee and AICC members must not offer Satyagraha nor should those interested in revising the Bombay decision. Apart from these, civil

disobedience should continue without interruption,' said Gandhi in a statement of 7 December from Wardha.¹⁴⁹

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December and the entry of the United States into the Second World War on 8 December, made Gandhi sad with the thought that America could not keep out of the war and exercise her good offices as a neutral Great Power to restore peace in the world.¹⁵⁰ Churchill thanked heaven for granting the prayer of the British people so dramatically and flew to America to meet Roosevelt for concerting measures of war.¹⁵¹ On 10 December, the British battleships the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* were sunk by Japanese aircraft off the Malay coast.¹⁵² Jawaharlal, the acknowledged Congress spokesman on foreign affairs, gave on 12 December a statement to the *Daily Herald* of London: 'The entry of Japan into the war has now made it world-wide and it approaches India's border. That is of vast interest to us but it will not make us panicky. Our sympathies must inevitably be with the non-Fascist nations and such help as we can give them, consistently with our principles, would flow to them if we functioned as a free people.' In his statement of 20 December to the *News Chronicle* of London, Jawaharlal put his viewpoint more forcefully: 'The first essential is the recognition of Indian independence, and the consignment to the dustbin of the infamous August declaration and all other similar declarations of the British Government.'¹⁵³ Azad also said in public speeches that the main obstacle in changing the Congress attitude towards the war was the British Government's attitude towards nationalist India, and that the issue before the Congress was not one of violence versus non-violence.¹⁵⁴ In parts of the country, especially Assam, people were panicky; in reply to letters from them, Gandhi issued a statement on war alarm and panic: 'I would not like it to be said of us as a nation that we run about like mad men on the approach of the slightest danger.' It was wrong for people to make a rush and crowd the railway stations whenever there was a scare of bombing. Gandhi advised responsible Congressmen in areas like Assam not to offer satyagraha and to steady the panicky people.¹⁵⁵

On 23 December, Maulana Azad and twelve members of the Working Committee met at Swaraj Ashram in Bardoli, in the Surat District of Gujarat, where Gandhiji was staying for a few weeks. On meeting Gandhiji after a year, Maulana Azad felt instinctively that, as in the past, Gandhiji remained firmly opposed to collaboration in the war effort, and that the recent developments in the conflict of the Great Powers in Asia had rather strengthened in his mind an apprehension that Great Britain would get the Congress support and association in the war effort by accepting the demand for a clear promise of independence after the war. On his part, the Congress president felt that it was time for the party to

revive the Delhi-Poona Offer of the Congress and to suspend the civil disobedience movement. Gandhiji was aware of the pressure of events and the climate of opinion in the country opposing his choice of policy, but he believed the Congress had leaders whose judgement and independent thinking deserved his and the nation's respect. 'It was a striking testimony to Gandhiji's capacity for finding a solution to the most difficult of problems', Maulana Azad later recorded in his autobiography, 'that even in this impasse he had a formula which could meet two opposite points of view.' 'When he saw my firm attitude on the question of India's participation in war, he did not press me any longer to change it. On the contrary, he placed before the Working Committee a draft Resolution which faithfully reflected my point of view.'¹⁵⁶ The impasse was resolved after two days; the committee, after hearing two drafts, one by Jawaharlal and another by Rajendra Prasad, decided to set up a sub-committee (Maulana Azad, Jawaharlal, Rajendra Prasad, Rajaji and Govind Ballabh Pant) which would frame a resolution acceptable to Congressmen of different points of view regarding the best line of action. With minor changes the sub-committee draft was adopted as the Bardoli resolution.

As Gandhiji told the AICC at Wardha the next month, the Bardoli Resolution of 30 December 1941 on the Present Situation was 'a mirror' in which all groups could see themselves:

The original was Jawaharlalji's draft, but it was referred to a sub-committee at whose hands it has undergone material changes. The original had left no room for Rajaji to work. The sub-committee opened a tiny window for him to squeeze in. Jawaharlalji's opposition to participation in the war effort is almost as strong as mine, though his reasons are different. Rajaji would participate, if certain conditions acceptable to the Congress were fulfilled. The non-violent non-cooperators like Rajendra Babu have certainly a place, for, until the remote event takes place, non-violence rules supreme.

At Bardoli, to his astonishment, Gandhiji found that Maulana Azad and Jamnalal Bajaj were correct in holding that the wording of the Bombay Resolution did not exclude an interpretation that the Congress opposition to the war effort was mainly or obviously on political grounds. Gandhi decided to leave the Congress, and not to conduct civil disobedience on its behalf. 'J.B. Kripalani expressed the dissent from the resolution, the ground of his dissent being the opening which the resolution left for armed help in the war if certain conditions were fulfilled.' Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan could not fully support the resolution; he was opposed to participation in war principally on the ground of non-violence. Ghaffar Khan proposed to resign once again from the Working Committee, but Maulana Azad persuaded him to keep his resignation in

abeyance. 'His continuance on the Working Committee did not fetter in the least his liberty to propagate his view.' This was recorded in the Working Committee's proceedings at Bardoli.¹⁵⁷

For Congressmen and other observers of the Indian scene, the Bardoli Resolution on 'Present Situation' had eight points of interest. First, by way of preamble, the Working Committee observed that, in the fourteen fateful months that had elapsed since its last meeting, old problems had assumed a new significance and new problems were introduced by the war approaching Indian frontiers. 'The Committee have endeavoured to keep in view the principles and objectives for which the Congress has stood during these past many years and considered them in the larger context of world conditions and world freedom.' Second: 'The Committee are convinced that full freedom for the people of India is essential even, and more especially, in the present state of world turmoil, not only for India's sake but for the sake of the world.' This meant that the basic demand of the Congress, independence for India, was unimpaired in spite of the question of Indian defence becoming insistent after Japan's entry into the World War; the Congress would not be satisfied with less than Indian Independence under any circumstances. Third, the Congress statement explaining its attitude towards war, issued on 14 September 1939, was maintained as full and valid; the Congress was willing to help the cause of freedom and democracy in the world against the Nazi and the Fascist aggression, provided Great Britain included the independence of India among her war aims. The Congress did not consider victory of Great Britain in the war as a sufficient or satisfactory war aim from the Indian nationalist viewpoint. Fourth, by the Individual Satyagraha campaign in the past fourteen months under Gandhiji's leadership, the Congress had strengthened the national movement. About 25,000 Congressmen who had suffered imprisonment, and many thousands of others who had offered satyagraha but were not arrested by the government, had asserted non-violently their sense of the rights of the Indian people. Fifth, the Committee reiterated the Congress charge that the British Government was completely authoritarian in India. Sixth, the Congress viewed with concern the fresh wave of arrests started by the government in recent weeks under the plea of the defence of India. Seventh, in spite of the above, the Congress made a fresh declaration of its sympathies in the world-wide war. 'The sympathies of the Congress must inevitably lie with the peoples who are the subject of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom. But only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war.' This sentence conveyed an impression that the Delhi-Poona Offer could be revived by the Congress. The eighth point of interest in the Bardoli Resolution was a

sentence affirming the Bombay Resolution without interpreting it. 'The Committee is, therefore, of opinion that the resolution of the AICC passed in Bombay on September 16, 1940, holds to-day and defines Congress policy still.' The Working Committee wisely left it open to believers in conditional co-operation and supporters of satyagraha policy to hold together in their struggle against 'an arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from fascist authoritarianism.'¹⁵⁸

In a separate resolution, the Working Committee recorded their acceptance of Gandhiji's letter of resignation from his position of the guide of the Congress civil disobedience movement. In his letter to the Congress president which was appended to the committee's resolution, Gandhi said that on re-reading the Bombay Resolution he found that the opposition of Congressmen to participation in war need not be on the ground of non-violence. 'I had interpreted it to mean that the Congress was to refuse participation in the present or all war on the ground principally of non-violence.' The letter of the Bombay Resolution could not bear his interpretation. 'The resolution contemplated material association with Britain in the war effort as a price for guaranteed independence of India. If such was my view and I believed in the use of violence for gaining independence and yet refused participation in the effort as the price of that independence I would consider myself guilty of unpatriotic conduct. It is my certain belief that only non-violence can save India and the world from self-extinction.'¹⁵⁹ Gandhi declared that he would continue, on his own and with selected followers, his campaign for free speech against all war. The time being critical, he did not propose to call for satyagraha such Congressmen and others whose services were required to steady the people in parts of the country where panic prevailed because of the threat of air raids.

For the cause of Gandhian *seva* (service) for *purna swaraj* for millions of people in free India, the partial withdrawal of Gandhi from the Congress at the end of December 1941 was not more significant an event than the publication at Bardoli, on or shortly before 23 December (the day the Working Committee started its meeting there), of a 27-page pamphlet, *Constructive Programme* by M.K. Gandhi.¹⁶⁰ 'My handling of civil disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon.' In this inspiring essay, one of the most remarkable statements of the Gandhian way he ever wrote, Gandhi reminded all heroic patriots that *purna swaraj* was conceived by him as a continuing programme of struggle with thirteen tremendous odds enumerated as 'Thirteen Points', and that political freedom of India from the British rule was only one part of the objective of true satyagrahis. The *purna swaraj* ideal had the following constructive work in its programme: communal harmony, removal of untouchability, prohibi-

tion, promotion of khadi and village industries, village sanitation, uplift of women, popular education in health and hygiene, basic education, adult education, the propagation of the national language (Hindi), love of one's own language, and work for economic equality. A satyagrahi could choose to work in any one or more of these fields, according to individual capacity, for the good of fellow men. Constructive work could give as nothing else non-violent strength to a person and to an organization; this had been proved in Gandhi's own life and in the development of the Congress as an organization in the past two decades, in the course of developing the Constructive Programme which was still mainly Gandhian. Unregenerated political life, in India, as elsewhere, would be squalid, and without much power for good, for the cause of a nobler civilization which was at the back of Gandhi's mind in all his thoughts of non-violence and swaraj.

Gandhi was too big to be contained even by the Indian National Congress. Yet, by the ties of affection of a 'Bapu', and common memory of self-imposed suffering in high endeavour for twenty years, and by his supreme moral authority over Congressmen and Congress sympathizers, Mahatma Gandhi still led the Congress. Two weeks after the Bardoli resolutions, he would address the All India Congress Committee meeting at Wardha and ask Congressmen to support the resolutions and to do nothing to split the Congress. He appeared to be at peace with the Congress always, but scarcely so with the Government of India. Gandhi's 'last campaign' started with Vinoba Bhave's satyagraha in 1940. It did not terminate, so far as Gandhi's personal position was concerned, with the Bardoli Resolutions of the Working Committee in 1941. For him there was no retreat, no turning back. For the Congress, there was a retreat in December 1941. Being an organization with lakhs of members and sympathizers, the Congress had to make a strategic retreat from 'active satyagraha' to 'passive satyagraha' because of the impact on Indian opinion of the war storm in the Pacific and the South China Sea, which did not appear far from the Bay of Bengal in every school atlas.

Notes and References

1. See Jawaharlal's speech, 9 March 1940, Allahabad University, in S. Gopal (Genl. ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New Delhi, 1977) (abbrev. SWJN), X, pp. 347-51.
2. For Home Ministry, G.O.I., deliberations on plans and preparations of action to be taken against the Congress organization in case of civil disobedience; measures to counteract disorders in India during the war; preparations of lists of persons to be arrested and detained in the event of a revolutionary movement, etc., see in the National Archives, New Delhi, Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/11/40 and 3/19/40; also 3/17/40, for the DIR

clauses involved in the Amendment, 21 October 1940. On 11 October 1939, the governor general sent a circular letter to the governors requesting their views on matters likely to arise in a Section 93 situation, advisability of amendment of the Indian Criminal Law, a 'lightning war' against the Congress organization from the beginning, adequacy of police forces, arrangements against sabotage of public buildings, railways, etc., adequacy of public staff, and similar matters. On the lightning war proposal, Assam said: 'But if Congress keep the gloves on [and we are sure that they contain nothing that would not be in conformity with the Queensberry rules], we should do the same.' Bihar, the Central Provinces, the North-West Frontier Province, and Orissa, replied that Government should launch a lightning war. Bombay said, Government should not be the first to take the gloves off. Madras said: 'Quick, firm, but good-humoured action will stop widespread developments. Raja-gopalachari has expressed the opinion that in previous C.D. movements we did not hit hard enough.' Bengal would wait to see the line Congress would take: 'In Bengal much will depend on the course which the left wing may adopt.' Bengal would, however, find it necessary to take preventive action against the Congress left wing if they combined with terrorist organisations in the province. The United Provinces said that vigorous action from the very beginning would be necessary against the Congress left wing, but drastic action against the Congress right wing should be postponed as long as was reasonably possible.

3. See in Nripendranath Mitra, (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register* (abbrev. IAR) (Calcutta), 1939, II, pp. 21, 93, 96-7, 101-2, 104-6.
4. Jawaharlal wrote on 8 March 1940 to V.K. Krishna Menon, London: 'Some newspapers say that the government is thinking of banning the Congress.' See in *SWJN*, X, pp. 618-9.
5. 'Don't expect me to reveal how, if ever, I shall launch civil disobedience, Gandhi told a meeting of Congress workers at Allahabad in November 1939. In December 1939, the CWC meeting at Wardha declared that 'since the Congress is pledged to non-violence, the final sanction behind it is civil resistance, which is but a part of satyagraha.' See in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma : Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (New ed. Rev., March 1962), V (1938-40), pp. 206-7, 217-8.
6. See in the previous chapter of this work, Section 5; satyagraha preparations made by the provincial Congress committees, 1940.
7. For quotations in extenso from CWC confidential proceedings, Ramgarh, March 1940, see in D.G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 209-304.
8. See in Tendulkar, *Ghaffar Khan*, pp. 309-12. Also, see R. J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 38-9.
9. Tendulkar, *Ghaffar Khan*, pp. 309-10.
10. In *IAR*, 1940, I, see pp. 45-56, 59-60.
11. In *IAR*, 1940, I, see p. 51. (The Communist Party of India and its branches were declared unlawful by an order of July 1934. In March 1940, the Congress Socialist Party resolved to expel Communists from its ranks, putting an end to the unhappy marriage of convenience made in 1936

between Congress Socialists, who would do nothing to destroy the official Congress, and the avowed Communists, who, as Jawaharlal once said, talked of 'fight the Congress', 'fight the Government' and 'fight all other parties'. In AICC meetings, Communists were highly vocal. Communists, Royists, and Forward Bloc men were not expelled from the Congress organization in 1940-1, but disciplinary action was taken against individual members of these parties known to be vociferously anti-Congress in political denunciations. The Congress Socialists supported Maulana Azad's candidature for presidency of the Congress in the Congress elections of February 1940.

For the Intelligence Bureau tables showing the affiliation or grouping of the delegates at Ramgarh, and of elected AICC Session Delegates (and PCC members) in March 1940, found in I.B. Memo, No. 38/Cong/40 of 15 April, 1940 in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 4/4/40, see in B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian National Congress and the Raj, 1929-1942: The Penultimate Phase* (London, 1976), pp. 148-9. In the Congress elections of February 1940, out of the 3,111 elected to the Ramgarh Congress, only 646 were known to be members of left wing organizations (248, CSP; 118; Forward Bloc; 4, Kisan Sabha; 52, Royists; 48, CPI; 176 other left).

12. All groups of the Congress leftists were possibly represented in the lists of arrests etc., of Congressmen in May and June, 1940, included in the AICC Genl. Secy's Circular Letter of information to the PCCs, dated 13 July 1940. See in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 179-92 (Jawaharlal, whom the authorities regarded as no rightist at heart, issued a statement to the press on 8 March 1940, published by the *Hindustan Times* on the following day. Jawaharlal described Jayaprakash Narayan's arrest in Patna on 7 March as significant: 'It means the determination of the government to declare war on the Congress.' 'In Bengal civil liberties have been sought to be completely crushed; in the Punjab hundreds of Congressmen and Ahrars have been imprisoned and the process continues.' In *SWJN*, X, pp. 346-47.)
13. For arrests etc., mentioned in this paragraph, see the AICC Genl. Secy's Circular to the PCCs, dated 13 July 1940, in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 179-92. Also, see in the NMM Library, New Delhi, AICC, R-1/1940, pp. 1-6, AICC Circular, Foreign Dept., Allahabad, No. 5. dt. 19 April 1940, saying: 'The Government has now found a good excuse in the war for suppressing all liberties.'
14. Jayaprakash Narayan was sentenced at Chaibasa in Bihar.
15. In July and August 1940, there was another phase in government action against Congressmen, in which provincial level leaders in the United Provinces were arrested. Among these were Sri Krishna Datt Paliwal, Rammanohar Lohia, Jugal Kishore, Balkrishna Sharma, and Z.A. Ahmed. Paliwal was the President of the PCC in the UP; he was arrested at Farrukhbad on 20 August 1940. See in *SWJN*, XI, p. 122 fn, p. 309 fn.
16. By mid-April 1940, about 300 nationalists were arrested in the Punjab. See in AICC, R-1/1940, pp. 1-6. Also, AICC, G-25/1940 pp. 85, for the Punjab PCC Working Committee's resolution of 18 July 1940, condemning government action, wholesale raids, arrests and detention orders in the

Punjab, as an attempt to destroy piecemeal the solidarity and organization of the Congress on the plea that Communists and others constituted a nucleus of an anti-British 'fifth column' in India.

17. See in AICC, R-1/1940, pp. 1-6.
 18. The provisional constitution of the Indian Civil Liberties Union (Bombay Mutual Building, Sir Pheroza Shah Mehta Road, Bombay) was drafted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 3 July 1936 'after reference to the constitutions and rules of the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Council of Civil Liberties of Great Britain'. See in AICC, G-25/1940, pp. 1-3. This AICC file contains many sheets of correspondence and reports relating the application of the DIR against political workers in various parts of British India. In the statement of the cases of infringement of civil liberty from September 1939 to May 1940, prepared by the Indian Civil Liberties Union, Bombay, the following are the figures for Bengal, the province in which there were highest in number of cases: Anti-Government speeches and sedition charges, 106; number of presses affected, 19; press securities demanded, Rs 20,000; advance security demanded, Rs 2,600; press security forfeited, Rs 16,000; restraint orders general, 455; Restraint Orders re. labour and kisans, 490. In all but one category (speeches and sedition charges, 183 cases), mentioned above figures for the Punjab were second only to Bengal.
 19. In *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 179-92.
 20. See in the present work the previous Chapter, the Section on the Bombay Resolution of the AICC, September 1940.
 21. In *IAR*, 1940, II, p. 22.
 22. For Gandhi's speeches before the AICC, 15-16 September, 1940, at Bombay, see *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 211-20.
 23. 'This time it is going to be a fight.' Kripalani to Allah Baksh, dt. 5 October 1940; see in AICC, G-2/1940, pp. 121-2.
 24. See in AICC, G-5, Pt.4/1940, P. 1; letter dt. 4 January 1940, from Arun Chandra Guha, Secy. Bengal PCC.
 25. See *Hindusthan Standard* (Calcutta, Delhi ed.), 3 July 1940 and 4 July 1940 for report of the public meeting at Albert Hall, Calcutta, urging the removal of the 'Holwell Monument of the Blackhole Tragedy, and for report of Subhas Chandra Bose's arrest, under Section 129 of the DIR, providing for preventive detention, on 2 July from his Elgin Road residence. Between 3 and 10 July, 104 Forward Bloc satyagrahis courted arrest. Sarat Bose called for a suspension of the Forward Bloc satyagraha following an announcement on 23 July by Premier Fazlul Huq, that government proposed to take immediate steps for the removal of the Holwell Monument.
- 'So long as Subhas Babu considers a particular course of action to be correct, he has every right, and it is his duty, to pursue it whether the Congress likes it or not,' said Mahatma Gandhi, commenting on Subhas's arrest. 'He told me in the friendliest manner that he would do what the Working Committee had failed to do. He was impatient of delay.' Gandhi warned Subhas that his way was wrong. See, Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, pp. 301-2.

26. See in Home Dept. Poll.(I), 4/13/1940, pp. 21, 35, 36 and Extension 26. The Special Branch, UP, dt. 9 Sept. 1940, reported that the CWC members, including Sardar Patel, were said to be opposed to the crisis precipitated by Congress leaders in the UP on the volunteer organization issue. An IB Source Report, Calcutta, 3 September, said that Maulana Azad had received information by telephone that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru might court arrest on the volunteer question. For Jawaharlal's views, see *SWJN*, XI, pp. 115-17 (Address at Kanpur Volunteers' Rally, 11 August 1940), and pp. 135-6 (Valedictory address to Kaumi Seva Dal, Allahabad, 10 September 1940).
27. See in the *Modern Review* (Calcutta) for the October 1940, note on the CWC's Decision about UP Volunteer Organizations. By a resolution, dt. 18 Sept. 1940, the CWC called upon all Congress organizations to stop all civil disobedience, pending definite instructions from Mahatma Gandhi.
28. See in Home Dept. Poll(I), 4/13/40, p. 35, IB Report, dt. 9 September 1940, from the United Provinces.
29. See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 343-7. Also, in *IAR*, 1940, I, p. 237, AICC Genl. Secy's Circular to the PCCs, No. 1, dt. 23 March 1940, saying, 'The Congress stands for civil liberty, for the liberty of the press and the platform and of conscience.'
30. See in Home Dept. Poll (I), 3/33/40, pp. 9-11, extract from report dt. 21 October 1940 from C.I.O., Bombay, to Home, New Delhi.
31. This appears as an extract in p. 29 in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/3/40 K.W. In *SWJN*, XI, see pp. 142-5, for the full text.
32. See in *IAR*, 1940, I, pp. 238-9, the form of the Satyagraha Pledge to be signed by Congressmen who proposed to become 'active' satyagrahis.
33. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, pp. 47-9, Note dt. 24 Dec. 1940, regarding talk between M.K. Gandhi and T.R. Deogirkar, President, Maharashtra PCC.
34. In Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, see Abstract, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's speech at Allahabad, 13 December 1940.
35. People did wonder at Gandhi's choice of the first satyagrahi. 'Look at the poor show of Vinoba. Why do you select spiders, in life and death struggle? Study the Histories of the world before you promise the golden apple to the people.' Letter from one 'Lacerated', no date; in AICC, G-1 (Pt. 1)/1940, see pp. 61-4. An IB telegram from Nagpur, dt. 16 October 1940, conveyed news from Wardha that 24 persons were said to be ready for direct action; these included Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Vinoba Bhave, but excluded all members of the CWC who supported the Poona resolution. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, p. 7.
36. For Gandhiji's statement of 15 October 1940 on the issue and plan of the satyagraha he was launching on behalf of the Congress, see in AICC, G-4/1940, pp. 17-27.
37. See Telegram, Gov. Genl., Home Dept., New Delhi, 27 Oct. 1940, to Secretary of State, London; in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/17/40, p. 107.
38. For G.O.I., Home Dept. Order, dt. 24 Oct. 1940, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/4/40, p. 39. Also, see Govt. Order, 21 Oct. 1940, and an Amend-

- ment to the DIR, Restrictions on the Press, in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/17/40.
39. 'I may inform the public that satyagraha is independent of press advertisement.' See Gandhiji's statement, 24 October 1940, bidding goodbye to the readers of the *Harijan*, in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VI, pp. 1-3.
 40. See copy, obtained by I.B., Gandhi's letter of 24 October 1940 to J. Nehru, in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, p. 16. Jawaharlal had asked the Secretary, PCC UP, by a letter dt. Allahabad 12 Sept. 1940, to 'Go Ahead', to be in readiness to start Civil Disobedience, the signal having come from Gandhi. 'Long live the Independence of India,' wrote Jawaharlal. See in AICC, p-1/1940-41, p. 21. Also see in *SWJN*, XI, pp. 192, 199, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur's record of Gandhi-Jawaharlal conversations at Wardha on 29 and 30 October 1940. Gandhiji was thinking in terms of a political fast on the issue of the government's restrictive orders on the press. Jawaharlal succeeded in dissuading Gandhi from resorting to a fast or to offer satyagraha in person. Jawaharlal told Gandhi on 30 October: 'I still feel, after sleeping over it, that I must go to jail. But your fast — the last resort, so to speak, is inopportune. It will create confusion in the mass mind. It will be interpreted by the government that individual civil disobedience had failed. I feel you ought to get the members of the Working Committee to offer Civil disobedience.' Gandhiji was reluctant to do it. It seems he proposed to open the campaign with 'token satyagraha' as the first, and satyagraha by notables, if necessary, as the second, step.
 41. See Home Dept. Poll. (I) Secret, 3/4/40, and in the notes section of the same file, for information relating to Nehru's prejudicial speeches, his trial before E. de V. Moss, District Magistrate, Gorakhpur, and extracts from the *National Herald*, etc. The magistrate noted that the accused had called 'Angraizi Raj' a 'Sahukari Raj' (Government of Financial Imperialism), in the course of a prejudicial speech.
 42. In AICC, p-1/1940, pp. 70-3, see AICC Circular to the PCCs, and copy of Jawaharlal's statement of 3 November 1940 before the magistrate.
 43. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/4/40, for warning to the *National Herald*, and Home Dept. Circular dt. New Delhi 16 November 1940 to all Chief Secretaries in the provinces, who were instructed that copies of J. Nehru's speech before the court at Gorakhpur should be forfeited as unauthorized under the Press Emergency Powers Act, and that possession of such copies amounted to an offence under Defence of India Rule 39.
 44. See in *IAR*, II, pp. 198-200, Jawaharlal's statement before the court at Gorakhpur. Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/10/40 indicate that in the UP, students' reaction to J. Nehru's arrest was less than expected, and it was confined to Kanpur, Allahabad, Banaras and Gorakhpur mainly. At Kanpur, on 6 November, unruly students threw a handful of gravel at and abused European women in cars. At Allahabad, on the same date, students threw stones at an officer of the Ordinance Department. Also, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, p. 37, an extract from the Fortnightly Report from CIO, Madras, for the first half of November 1940, that there

was a students' strike on Nehru's arrest, a whispering campaign that the Allies were losing the war, and a speech on 16 November at Madras saying that India merely wanted a promise of freedom. Sucheta Kripalani, Secretary, Women's Department, AICC, told the court trying her for satyagraha on 7 December: 'The English youths may leave their schools and colleges to fight on the battlefield for their freedom but it is not proper for the Indian youths to demonstrate against a monstrous sentence which has shocked even Englishmen.' See in *IAR*, 1941, II, pp. 200-1.

45. For Gandhi's arguments for going on a satyagrahi fast, and Jawaharlal's arguments against it, see *SWJN*, XI, pp. 192-9. In AICC, G-1(Pt.1)/1940, pp. 56-9, see telegrams from Sardul Singh Caveeshar, dt. Lahore 5 November, and from President Bombay Committee Grain Merchants' Association, Bombay, to Maulana Azad requesting that Gandhiji should be dissuaded from taking this step. Also see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/-40, pp. 29-30, copy of a letter following a telegram from Subhas Chandra Bose to Caveeshar, Acting President, Forward Bloc, asking him to protest against Gandhiji's decision to go on fast. 'After the debacle following the Rajkot fast, I thought we had seen the last of the Gandhian fasts. . . . What is this fast, if it is not moral coercion and why should the apostle of non-violence resort to it? . . . he is using it as a substitute for mass movement after reducing the Congress to impotence.'
46. The Supplementary Finance Bill proposed the imposition of a federal surcharge of 25 per cent on income including Super Tax and Corporation Tax. No political party could welcome the government's financial measures in this period. The war cost the Government of India Rs 20 lakhs a day. See *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 41-2.
47. 'In view of the extension of individual civil disobedience, the idea of a fast naturally remains in abeyance,' said Gandhiji in an interview at Wardha on 7 November. Gandhiji was present at the CWC meeting at Wardha on 8 November. On this day Maulana Azad issued a statement declaring that there was no question of Gandhiji fasting, and that as for the Congress programme, the scheme of civil disobedience directed and guided by Gandhiji stood. See *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 42-3.
48. See AICC, p. 1/1940, pp. 70-3, and AICC, G-25/1940, pp. 74-5.
49. AICC Genl. Secy's Circular No. 23, dt. Allahabad, 4 November 1940. See AICC, G-25/1940, pp. 74-5. The system of walking newspapers was not developed, probably because the patriotic press was not completely silenced in 1940-1. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/10/40, a report, dt. 5 December 1940, saying that Congress volunteers who shouted out news in Nagpur announce only news which had not appeared in the press such as statements of Nehru and local Congressmen delivered in court at the time of prosecution.
50. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/5/40, K.W., on the press attitude towards the civil disobedience movement. The authorities were displeased particularly with the editor of the *Hindustan Times*. The Chief Press Adviser issued, on 30 January 1941, fresh instruction to editors regarding restraint in publishing satyagraha news. Government felt that Mr Gandhi

should not be allowed to use the press as a ready medium for the conveyance of his instructions to Congressmen on anti-war satyagraha.

51. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/10/40, for report from Bihar, for week ending 27 November 1940, referring to Syed Mahmud and Rajendra Prasad. It was felt that Gandhi was keeping back Rajendra Prasad to guide the movement in Bihar. Rajendra Prasad would do it strictly according to Gandhi's injunctions, especially about non-removal of Congress funds and other matters.
52. On Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's arrest, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/1940, pp. 76-9. Conviction will be preferable for publicity reasons.
53. See in AICC, C-36/1942, p. 67, and in Home Dept. Poll (I) 3/7/40, p. 41, from Chief Commissioner, Ajmer, dt. 10 December 1940.
54. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 18, 47, 58, 77, for reports from Assam covering December 1940. Also see in AICC, C-36/1941, p. 51, for 3rd weekly report from PCC, Assam, and p. 65 for report dated 11 February 1941. In North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Sibsagar, and Jorhat, the authorities did not arrest all Congressmen who were offering satyagraha. By 11 February 1941, about 214 satyagrahis were convicted; 62 satyagrahis were not arrested. Of the women satyagrahis in Assam, 17 were convicted, 7 were arrested and let off, one was not arrested.
55. For the civil disobedience movement in Bengal, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, S. No. 14, p. 17, report from Calcutta, dt. 4 Dec. 1940, saying that only the intelligentsia appeared interested, and the policy of disregarding announcements of an intention to offer satyagraha deflated the enthusiasm of prospective satyagrahis. Also, Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, p. 30 from Bengal dt. 11 December 1940, saying that the Bose faction and Jugantar group, among unorthodox Congress groups, were contemplating Satyagraha on their own, but plans were not definite. In Home Dept. Poll. 3/33/40, see report from Calcutta, dt. 30 November, on popular speculation on Subhas Chandra Bose's release on 5 December. While some viewed it as a gesture of the Coalition Party to revive the Sarat Bose-Muslim League Pact proposal, others considered it as a move deliberately taken by the government to avert a settlement between the Forward Bloc and the rightists in the Congress, taking advantage of Gandhi's civil disobedience movement. There was also an Intelligence report (in the above mentioned file) that Subhas asked his brother, Sarat Bose, in course of a personal meeting, not to make an anti-Congress League-Bose coalition for which Mr Jinnah had made an approach to Sarat Bose. Subhas told Sarat that Mahatma Gandhi probably had plans for widening civil disobedience; in that case, the masses would be drawn in, and the picture of politics in Bengal, too, would change.

For reports from the PCC, Bengal, see AICC, C-37 (Pt.1)/1941, 93-111; and AICC, C-6/1941, p. 87. In Calcutta, 19 Congressmen were offering satyagraha repeatedly, but the police were not arresting them; this was indicated in a Bengal PCC report for March 1941. Banamali Ghose, Asstt. Secy., Uluberia South District Congress Committee, Howrah, offered satyagraha no less than 13 times, between 4 March and 30 March 1941, but he was not arrested.

56. For information on civil disobedience in Bihar, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, reports covering December 1940, pp. 11-12, 36-8, 68, 80; also Home Dept. Poll (I), 3/10/40 for Sri Krishna Sinha's offering of Satyagraha on 27 November, and extract from *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 28 November, reporting on the event in which the crowd became violent. Sri Krishna Sinha was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. In AICC, C-36/1941, pp. 27-8, see a report from the PCC, Bihar, saying: 'It seems government have made their policy to arrest only those satyagrahis who are not ordinary in their eyes.'
57. For civil disobedience reports from Bombay authorities, see the following: Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 25, 28-9, 50, 66 and Ser. No. 14, pp. 15-6; in 3/17/40, see S. 25; in 3/33/40 see report dt. 18 January 1941; and 3-10/40, for Dr Kazi's satyagraha at Jalgaon on 25 November 1940. In AICC, C-36/1941, p. 21, 73-7; in C-37 (Pt.1)/1941, see pp. 5-9. In their report, dt. Bombay 9 March 1941, the Bombay PCC gave short sketches of the satyagrahis arrested in Bombay in February 1941. Among these were: Shri D.D. Wadia (President and Secretary) of the F Ward, DCC for some years; jailed in 1923 at Nagpur, at Akola in 1930, at Bombay in 1932); Mr N.N. Abbasi (labour worker, important worker of Jamiat-ul-ulema, SDO of the Prohibition Propaganda Board, officer of the Red Shirt Volunteer Corps, jailed in 1933 during the civil disobedience movement, Vice-President of A Ward DCC at the time of arrest); Shri Jayantilal L. Lathi, Secy. B Ward DCC, worked as captain of volunteers at Karachi, Faizpur, Haripura, and Bombay sessions of the Congress); Shri Joachim Alva (Congressman since 1930, associated with the Nationalist Christian Party, jailed in 1932-3 C.D. movement, co-opted member BPCC at the time of arrest). Gandhiji wanted such lists to make a who's who of this movement, but nobody in 1940-1 in the AICC office could possibly reduce to manageable reading length, or put into a reference work, such information for record. Yet, without some acquaintance with such material, or with 'walking histories' among all men, no one, today, can possibly gain an adequate idea of the representative character of the Indian National Congress claiming to speak for India in those times.
58. In AICC, C-6/1941, pp. 83, 95-9, 103; and C-36/1941, p. 41. In Mahakoshal and Vidarbha, unarrested satyagrahis were moving from village to village propagating Congress ideas in February 1940. In Home Dept. Poll. (I), see 3/10/40, 3/33/40, 3/17/40, 3/7/40, 3/4/40 files; in 3/17/40, see a report, dt. 15 November 1940, saying that Seth Poonamchand, President of the PCC, Nagpur, was convicted on 12 November for an objectionable speech made by him on 4 October 1940, at Tamsar in Bhandra district. Poonamchand made prejudicial remarks, for instance: 'The Government had taken our blood'; 'The great nation of France fell in 15 days and the British imperialism was about to die.'
59. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/4/1940, report from CP dated 6 January 1941, and extract from *Nagpur Times* of 23 December 1940, for Pyarelal's statement in court, 10 December. The full statement by Pyarelal appeared in the *Hindustan Times* of 24 December. Also see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 70/1, 81, for reports of 25 December 1940, and 1 January 1941.

Pyarelal had given intimation to the District Magistrate only, as required under the rule fixed by Gandhi, but other satyagrahis were not obeying this rule and were informing the public. It was reported that Gandhi had asked Mahadev Desai and Amrit Kaur to offer satyagraha, but they were hesitant.

60. See appreciation dt. Coorg, 11 Dec. 1940, in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, p. 46.
61. See in AICC, C-6/1941, p. 91; in C-37 (Pt. II), 1941, pp. 55-9. Following Asaf Ali's arrest on 30 November 1940, the other AICC members were suddenly and prematurely arrested. Brij Krishan Chandiwala, who was to initiate the second phase of the movement in Delhi, was arrested long before the date scheduled. Police behaviour was on the whole satisfactory. 'Food supplied in Delhi jail is half cooked and unwholesome.' 'Apart from excessive sentences, a certain amount of vindictiveness is noticeable in matter of classification of prisoners and their treatment in jail.' 'Unusual haste was made to realise fine and in some cases, particularly in rural area, cattle and agricultural implements of the family of the convicted persons have been attached.' To keep up the spirit of the people, Congressmen were organizing village conferences, charkha demonstrations and they observed Unity Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, and Anti-Imperialist Day.
62. See in *IAR*, 1940, II, events listed under the months November and December. In Home Dept. Poll (I), see 3/3/40, p. 90; 3/7/40, pp. 24, 42, 78; in 3/28/40, p. 36; and in 3/10/40, for weekly appreciations and other reports from Madras to Home, New Delhi. Also, see reports from the PCC, Andhra, in AICC, 6/1941, pp. 45, 47, 81-2; in C-36/1941, pp. 1, 69; C-37 (Pt.1)/1941, pp. 47-9.
53. For Tamil Nadu Congress Committee report dt. Madras, 28 April 1941, see in AICC, C-37 (Pt. I)/1941, pp. 45-51. They were organizing public meetings in various towns to expose the very bad treatment meted out to C class prisoners, especially female satyagrahis. Daily papers, too, were criticizing the attitude of the Government. There were 498 arrests and convictions under the DIR, and 148 under the Town Nuisance Act. Fines imposed on satyagrahis amounted to a total of Rs 57,433. In Ramnad District, a lady satyagrahi was beaten by the police, and in Chingleput District a polite and honest satyagrahi had been arrested under the Criminal Procedure Code and convicted for committing an offence of alleged theft. A 'number of other methods are being handled by the authorities in various parts.'
64. In AICC, C-6/1941, see in pp. 81-2, monthly report from the PCC, Andhra, for the period 6 January-5 February 1941, reviewing progress in the past four months. 'During the first month Satyagraha was offered on every working day. Sundays and public holidays were excluded. In Andhra Desa during this period 680 people offered satyagraha.' Of late, magistrates were delaying trials of satyagrahis. 'From the beginning the authorities in the Adoni Division Bellary District began new tactics by not arresting satyagrahis. This tactics later on spread to various other places in the presidency notably to Guntur Division of the Nellore

District and to Tenali Taluq in Guntur District.' According to reports received by the PCC, 46 satyagrahis were either not arrested or were arrested and let off. 'While the satyagrahis who have been released are marching from village to village receptions are being given to them by the villagers on the route. They are feeding the satyagrahis and crowds are gathering to hear the slogans uttered by the satyagrahis so marching to Delhi.'

Also see in AICC, No. 3/1941, list of 1589 prospective satyagrahis from Andhra Desa, submitted on 4 February 1941 by the PCC for Mahatma Gandhi's approval. Gandhiji called for such lists giving information about Congressmen seeking selection.

65. On Dr Khan Sahib's token arrest and discharge, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, pp. 72-4. The Provincial Government replied to Home, New Delhi, that Khan Sahib and others with him were offering token satyagraha to maintain Congress discipline and that they were not really interested in the anti-war propaganda. The Home Department, New Delhi, were not pleased with the policy of the local authorities and ruled that no repetition of the breaking of the law (the DIR) by Dr Khan Sahib should go unpunished. Also see, Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/28/40, p. 36; 3/33/40, p. 23, for information on satyagraha.
 66. In AICC, C-36/1941, p. 31, see letter from A. Qaiyum Swati to Sadik Ali, dt. 25 February 1941, indicate that the satyagraha of Ahrar volunteers (they were pro-Congress) received much attention from the local authorities. Qaiyum Swati reported that in the province the total number of arrests under the DIR was 37, including Maulvi Abdur Rahim Poplazai, the kisan leader of Peshawar, and Munshi Ghulam Ghaus of Baffa (Hazara District), Dictator, All-India Ahrar, who was arrested with 16 Ahrar volunteers at Charsada in Peshawar District. Also in AICC, C-37 (Pt.II)/1941, pp. 87A-9, see report, dt. 7 March 1941, from the PCC in NWFP, for information on the Ahrar satyagraha.
 67. 'We have learnt everything from England. She will never like to lose her independence. It is also our intention.' See translation of the above speech by H.K. Mahatab at Remuna on 1 December 1940; in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 20-1. Sarala Devi was sentenced to three months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs 100, or, in default, four months' imprisonment. For weekly appreciation reports from Cuttack to Home, New Delhi, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 20-1, 44, 63, 72 and S. No. 14, p. 4.
- In AICC, C-36/1941, p. 23, see telegram dt. 2 March 1941, from PCC, Utkal, indicating number of total convictions at 315, and fine imposed on satyagrahis at Rs 9,532. Few Congressmen could pay heavy fines for nationalist activity in those days. Utkal Congress workers were probably poorer on an average than those in neighbouring provinces.
68. See in AICC, C-36/1941, p. 13, see telegram received on 5 March 1941, from PCC, Lahore, saying that up to 28 February the number of satyagrahis arrested was 352 including 12 women, one English woman, and 17 members of the AICC. The number of other arrests stood at 121, and the total amount of fines stood at Rs 27,036 and one anna.

69. On Mian Iftikar-ud-Din's satyagraha, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/10/40; 3/17/40, S(11), pp. 44-50. On the Punjab generally, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, Ser. No. 14; 3/17/40; 3/28/40; 3/33/40.
70. On the Sardar Sampuran Singh affair, see Home Dept. Poll. 3/7/40, pp. 35, 55; also in *IAR*, 1940, II, pp. 50, 53.
71. See in AICC, C-37 (Pt.I) 1941, table prepared in March 1941, by the AICC office, of arrests in different provinces in connection with the Individual Satyagraha movement. Also, see in AICC, C-37 (Pt.2)/1941, pp. 83-5; and in *IAR*, 1941, I, pp. 31, 36. Dr Choitram Gidwani, President of the Sind, PCC, was arrested on 20 January 1941; he was sentenced on 4 February, under the DIR, to 18 months' rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of Rs 500, by the District Magistrate of Lahore, for a speech Gidwani delivered at Lahore on 13 January. Sachanand Pherumal, Vice-President of the Sind PCC had been arrested earlier, on 22 August 1940, and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment for a leading article in his weekly paper *Nava Bharat* published from Nawabshah. For weekly appreciation in November-December 1940, of satyagraha preparations by the Sind PCC, see in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 10, 40, 64, 82.
72. See in AICC, C-37 (Pt.1)/1941, table prepared by the AICC office in March 1941, of arrests in different provinces in connection with satyagraha.
73. For an account of Govind Ballabh Pant's trial for civil disobedience, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/17/40, Ser. No. 10, pp. 36-40. Also, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), Secret, 3/7/40, p. 31, for action against *Jagrit Janata*.
74. For weekly appreciation, from Lucknow, dt. 4 December 1940, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), Secret, 3/7/40, pp. 5-7.
75. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), Secret, 3/7/40, p. 31, appreciation dt. Lucknow, 12 December 1940.
76. See appreciation from CIO, dt. Lucknow, 14 December 1940, in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, p. 42.
77. In *IAR*, 1941, I, see pp. 28-31. We have accepted the dates given in AICC, C-36/1941, p. 34.
78. See AICC, C-36/1941, p. 33, also pp. 34, 37, and 59.
79. See AICC, C-37 (Pt.1)/1941, see table prepared in March 1941.
80. We have not seen any official table dated early in 1941 for all-India numbers of civil disobedience prisoners, except one giving number and classification of satyagrahis up to 6 January 1941; see in p. 36, Ser. No. 31, in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/28/40.
81. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, copies of telegrams from Gandhi to Mr Maxton, MP, London, dt. 4 Oct. 1940; from Gandhi to Carl Heath, London, dt. 4 Oct. 1940; and Rameshwari Nehru to Hartog, 5 Everness Garden, London, dt. 11 April 1941. Rameshwari Nehru's telegram to Hartog was originally drafted by Gandhi, said an Intelligence Report; Rameshwari worked on Gandhi's draft, and made alterations by way of abbreviation, but kept the words: 'undiluted autocracy reigns here'. The Censor removed those four words about autocracy in India and allowed the rest to be telegraphed to London.
82. 'Continue to bear in mind that Press of world regards up-to-date news of India's war effort in both the military and economic sphere as of first

- class importance.' See telegram from Secretary of State for India, dated London 13 November 1940; in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/17/40, p. 107.
83. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, p. 40, Telegram R. No. 70 dt. 6 January 1941 from Governor General to S/S, London, saying that considerable interest was raised in urban areas in the former Congress provinces on the occasion of satyagraha by important people, but general popular reactions were almost surprisingly small. Also see, Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40 appreciations, for instance on p. 63, from the UP, dt. 5 January 1941: 'The masses are so far untouched, though there is sympathy for men who are prepared to go to jail in their campaign to assist India towards freedom.' 'In so far as the movement concerns the right of free speech about the war the masses at least do not comprehend the necessity of it.'
 84. On Congress discipline during the Satyagraha of 1940-41, see Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 3, 36-8; in 3/33/40, pp. 42, 70, for instance.
 85. See in IAR, 1941, I, pp. 32, 38.
 86. See AICC, 2/1941, p. 5.
 87. AIR, 1941, II, pp. 175-6.
 88. For the text of the Pledge of 26 January 1941 see in AICC, G-26 (Pts. 2 & 3)/1942, pp. 375-7. This paragraph was dropped in 1942.
 89. IAR, 1941, II, pp. 176-7.
 90. Ibid.
 91. 'God speaks through acts of men and women.' See in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, V, pp. 218-20. Also see, in *Mahatma*, VI, pp. 11-12, Gandhi's saying: 'Non-violence is an attribute of the Almighty whose ways of fulfilling Himself are inscrutable.'
 92. See in AICC, 2/1941, pp. 19-20. 'In a subject country like India, the liberty of the press is doubly precious.'
 93. With reference to an earlier editorial, 'A word to Mr Gandhi' on February 1941; and Gandhi's reply published on 15 February 1941, *The Times of India* (Bombay), 15 February 1941, wrote an editorial on 'Mr Gandhi's Reply', saying that Gandhi mixed up spirituality and the exercise of 'spiritual' power with the application of pressure to gain 'political' ends, and that one should note, in this respect, Mr Jinnah's repeated declaration that the Congress demand for independence, which was really behind Gandhi's campaign, was equivalent to forcing the British Government to give way over the head of the Muslim community in India. See the relevant extracts of Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/5/40, K.W., pp. 40, 42 ff.
 94. Gandhi went to Allahabad to perform the opening ceremony of the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital on 28 February 1941; in course of his visit there he met other Indian leaders which naturally gave rise to political speculation.
 95. See AICC, C-37 (Pt. 1)/1941, for table of arrests and fines upto March 1941.
 96. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, weekly appreciation reports for January-February 1941, by which time arrests were fewer. Bombay reported on 18 January: 'The incarceration of so many political agitators must before

long create a considerable jail problem, if the flow continues.' Jail authorities in common jails were not accustomed to deal with too many 'political' prisoners at a time.

97. In AICC, p. 1/1940-1. pp. 12-13. Also, see in AICC, C-36/1941, p. 1, letter from R.K.L. Nandkeolyar, Chairman, the Kerala Congress Committee, dt. Calicut 23 April 1941.
98. See substance of the talk between Gandhi and Shri Gosavi, President, PCC, Maharashtra (Gosavi, along with Dr Lagu of Poona, saw Gandhi on 15 May 1941), in AICC G-9/1941, pp. 373-7.
99. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, pp. 93-4.
100. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/40, pp. 56-62.
101. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40, pp. 28, 50, from Bombay Govt.
102. Bombay reported, 11 December 1940, that Asoka Mehta had addressed the Bombay Students' Union on 3 December, and Y.J. Meherally had addressed St. Xavier's College students; both the leaders asked the students to be ready, for the current movement was bound to become a mass movement. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/7/40 p. 25.
103. By August 1940, the army was enlisting at the rate of 35,000 men a month. The naval personnel had increased by 200 per cent in the past one year. See John Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay, Lord Linlithgow in India, 1936-1943* (London, 1971), p. 192.
104. By 31 July 1941, collection for the Madras War Fund reached a total of £ 1,000,000. See *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 8.
105. 'Economic conditions are on the whole favourable and both Kisans and industrial workers are comparatively content,' said a report from the UP, dated 5 January 1941. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/1940, p. 63.
106. The spirit of the police was excellent. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/33/1940, p. 62 ff., report from the UP, dt. 20 January 1941.
107. Mr Leopold Amery, the Secretary of State, made frequent pronouncements on Indian inability to unite to break the political deadlock. Even a moderate like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru felt annoyed, and once asked: 'Is he strengthening the faith of Indians in British intentions?' See in *IAR*, 1941, I, pp. 331-2, Sapru's statement made on 29 April 1941, with reference to Amery's speech in the House of Commons on 22 April. Also, see note 'Mr Amery's Everlasting No.', in the *Modern Review* (Calcutta), August 1941, p. 105.
108. See the *Modern Review*, August 1941, pp. 125-7, for a note on 'Debate in Parliament about Expanded Council, etc.' for extracts of speeches by Amery and others.
109. See in Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/32/40, papers relating to a question of asking the *New York Times* to have Mr Inglis, the London *Times* correspondent at New Delhi, instead of N. Vishwanath as correspondent at New Delhi. Vishwanath's despatch (dt. New Delhi, 20 October 1940) reporting that talks between Gandhi and Linlithgow had finally broken down and a little-known man, named Vinoba Bhave, had been chosen by Gandhi to begin a civil disobedience movement, is in this Government file in original. The *New York Times* was the most strongly pro-British newspaper in the United States.

110. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/17/40, p. 107 ff. on the delicate question of approaching Reuters and giving them for distribution materials relating the sort of anti-war propaganda in which Gandhi and Congressmen were engaged. It was later felt that materials suppressed by the authorities in India could not be safely published abroad from where they could flow back to India as news.
111. People felt that Amery and Linlithgow were encouraging Jinnah and promoting disunity in India. See Gandhi's statement of 25 April 1941, in *IAR*, 1941, I, pp. 326-7. 'Mr Amery has insulted Indian intelligence by reiterating *ad nauseam* that Indian political parties have but to agree among themselves and Great Britain will register the will of a united India.'
112. 'We cannot take part in the Congress Anti-war satyagraha or in the Muslim League's Anti-United India satyagraha,' said Dewan Bahadur K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, Vice-President, All-India Hindu Mahasabha, on 28 August 1941. In *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 15.
113. In the spring of 1941, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru tried but failed to bring Gandhi and Jinnah together. See Sapru's appreciation of the political situation, in the statement he issued, on 29 April 1941, as Chairman of the Bombay Non-Party Leaders' Conference; in *IAR*, 1941, I, pp. 331-2.
114. 'If my interpretation of the Congress creed is correct, the Congress and Congressmen may offer non-violent resistance only and they are sure to succeed,' said Gandhi in a letter to Bhogi Lal, Secretary, PCC, Gujarat. See in *IAR*, 1941, I, p. 71, under the date 23 May 1941. Also, see in AICC, 2/1941, pp. 21-3, Gandhi's statement, dt. Sevagram 4 May 1941, on communal riots. Goondas flourish only in the midst of timid people, said Gandhiji.
115. For details relating Munshi's decision to leave the Congress see K.M. Munshi, *Indian Constitutional Documents*, Vol. I: *Pilgrimage to Freedom (1902-1950)*, (Bombay, 1967), pp. 74-7, and Appendixes Nos. 55 and 57.
116. Ibid. Also, see in AICC, G-9 (Pt.II)/1941, p. 587, Kripalani's letter, dt. 29 July 1941, addressed to S.M.K. Biyabani, Kurnool: 'The propaganda carried on by the League about Gandhiji advising people to resort to violence is quite false. You must have seen that because he insisted upon non-violence Mr Munshi had to leave the Congress. What he has said that non-Congressmen should resist aggression instead of running away as cowards. This is not against his creed on non-violence because non-violence does not advocate cowardly running away.' In his statement of 4 May 1941, on communal riots, Gandhi had said: 'Cowards will never bring peace or independence.'
117. 'Divide and rule' has been Great Britain's proud and ill-conceived motto.' See in *IAR*, 1941, I, pp. 326-7, Gandhi's statement of 25 April 1941.
118. For government deliberations regarding 'Indianizing' the Council, see R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India, 1939-1945*, (Oxford, 1979), pp. 40-2.
119. *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 6
120. In AICC, P 1/1940-1, p. 1, see Genl. Secy's Circular No. 45, dt. Sevagram, Wardha, 27 July 1941.

121. See Weekly appreciation, dt. 9 August 1941, from the United Provinces; in Home Dept. Poll., 3/17/40, Ser. 77, filed 19 August 1941.
122. For an instance of speculation by Indians in this period, see in the *Modern Review* for August 1941, p. 107, a Note: 'If Germany Wins, Or if Russia Wins —'. It said: 'Whatever befalls India, we would welcome Russia's victory and Germany's defeat.' 'Our opinion is that if even now India were allowed to be free, that would go a great way to ensure Germany's defeat.'
123. Before the War broke out in Europe, the dictators of Germany, Italy and Russia were often praised by many nationalists, because these dictators did astonish the world by rebuilding their nation's power and economy in a short period. It was noticed by the *Modern Review*, April 1939, pp. 382-3, that at the Tripuri Congress, Seth Govind Das, Chairman of the Reception Committee, in his speech observed that Mahatma Gandhi occupied in the Congress the position that Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini did among the Bolsheviks, Nazis and Fascists respectively. 'What a glorious company to be in for the saint of Segaeon!' exclaimed the *Modern Review*, ironically.
124. See in M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, *Roosevelt, Gandhi, Churchill; America and the Last Phase of India's Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi, 1983), pp. 9-11, on the making of the Charter.
125. See in the *Modern Review*, October 1941, pp. 310-11.
126. Guy Winant, the U.S. Ambassador, to whom Churchill sent an advance copy of his speech of 9 September 1941 on the Atlantic Charter, advised the Prime Minister to drop the passage denying the application of the Charter's third point to India, observing that the passage 'would simply intensify charges of Imperialism and leave Great Britain in the position of "a do-nothing policy"'. See Moore. *Churchill, Cripps, and India*, p. 42.
127. 'At this time when Britain admittedly requires all the help that India can give, this sort of statement had not better been made at all. Such words coming from a person of Mr Churchill's eminence and position tend to damp the enthusiasm of even those of us who sincerely want to do our best to help Great Britain in this crisis.' These observations were made by Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, nominee to the Viceroy's Executive Council, at Calcutta on 12 September 1941. See the *Modern Review*, October 1941, p. 316.
128. See the *Modern Review*, November 1941, p. 431.
129. See the *Modern Review*, September 1941, pp. 224-5.
130. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 18, entry under 9 September.
131. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 14, entry under 26 August 1941. Interviewed at Lucknow on 26 August 1941. Acharya Kripalani said: 'If any struggle in the world is going according to plan, it is the present movement of the Congress.'
132. Addressing a public meeting in Madras on 27 April 1941, S. Srinivasa Sastri said: 'We ask the Congress people to come back, lead us and protect us in this time of great trouble. Their place today as people who hold our confidence and suffrage, is beside us, and not in prison cells.' In *IAR*, 1941, I, p. 64.

133. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, entry under 11 September 1941.
134. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 19, entry under 12 September.
135. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 19, entry under 14 September.
136. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, pp. 19-20, referring to Bombay Government Press Note issued on 16 September.
137. 'Mr Satyamurti Advocates Re-capture of Political power by the Congress', under this heading, see Note in the *Modern Review*, September 1941, p. 227. In the same number on p. 226, see 'No Alteration in Congress Position Necessary', Note quoting Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's statement on being released from jail. For an analysis of Rajagopalachari's views see A.R.H. Copley, *The Political Career of C. Rajagopalachari 1937-1954: A Moralist in Politics* (Delhi, 1978), p. 178-82.
138. On 28 October, Dr G.V. Deshmukh (Congress Party) was specially present in the Central Legislative Assembly, to move reference to select committee of his bill on rights of Hindu married women. Sir Sultan Ahmed, the new Law Member, expressed a hope that other Congressmen would also return to the Assembly to give expert assistance in law-making.
139. This statement by Gandhi, defending the honour of an erring follower, became a memorable event for the Congress Socialists. See, Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections* (Bombay, 1962), pp. 109-10. Also, Minoo Masani, *Bliss Was It in that Dawn: A Political Memoir Upto Independence* (New Delhi, 1977), pp. 172-3. For the full text of Gandhiji's Statement issued from Wardha, 21 October 1941, see *Leader* (Allahabad), 23 October 1941, in the same paper, 20 October 1941, see comments on Jayaprakash's letter and extract from an editorial. 'Red Light', by the *Hindustan Times* of 19 October 1941, saying: 'There are many besides Mr Jayaprakash Narayan, who believe that the Satyagraha movement as conducted by Mahatma Gandhi is a failure as there has been no response from the Government so far, though they want only its extension and not the repudiation of its basis of non-violence.'
140. For the text of Gandhiji's statement 'Our Struggle — A Review', dt. Sevagram, 28 October 1941, see *IAR*, 1941, II, pp. 194-7.
141. See Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India*, pp. 41-2.
142. See in the *Modern Review*, October 1941, p. 316, quoting press report from London. Also, see Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India*, p. 40, saying that during the year following the failure of Linlithgow's August offer, there were about 23,000 convictions under the DIR.
143. In *IAR*, 1941, pp. 134-5, see extracts from Sir Reginald Maxwell's statement in the Central Legislative Assembly, 18 November 1941.
144. See Home Dept. Poll. (I), 3/24/41 on the ruling of the Lahore High Court that sending of an intimation to a District Magistrate of intention to shout anti-war slogans does not constitute an offence under Rule 121 of the DIR.
145. See *IAR*, 1941, II, pp. 134-5, for extracts from proceedings, Central Legislative Assembly, 18 November 1941.
146. See extract in *IAR*, 1941 II, p. 40.
147. In *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 41.

148. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom: An Autobiographical Narrative* (Bombay, 1959), pp. 38-9.
149. In *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 42, see extract, Gandhiji's statement, 7 December 1941.
150. In the *Modern Review*, January 1942, p. 7, see Gandhi's Statement dt. Bardoli, 20 December 1941, extract in full.
151. 'Being saturated and satisfied with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful.' See Winston S. Churchill, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston, 1950), pp. 607-8.
152. In those days, following Japan's declaration of war on the USA and Great Britain (Reuter report dt. London 8 Dec. 1941, published in Indian newspapers on 9 December), newspapers published nearly all the war news they could carry. The *Leader*, (Allahabad), 11 December 1941, came out with headlines on the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*. For evidence of Indian interest in the British strategy matters also, see in the *Modern Review*, February 1942, pp. 126-7, a Note, with extracts from a debate in the House of Lords, on the Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Chatfield's criticism of the Prime Minister's political decision to send the two famed battleships unescorted by proper ancillary vessels to Singapore.
153. See in *IAR*, 1941, II, pp. 43, 45, for extracts from Jawaharlal's statements, to the *Daily Herald*, issued on 12 December; and to the *News Chronicle*, on 20 December 1941.
154. In *IAR*, 1941, II, p. 45, see entry under 19 December.
155. In the *Modern Review*, January 1942, p. 7, see extract from Gandhiji's statement. He remained opposed to Congressmen joining the Government ARP organizations.
156. Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, pp. 39-40.
157. Gandhiji probably made up his mind early in December 1941 to withdraw partially from the Congress leadership. See AICC, G-24/1940-1, pp. 1-5. For extracts from CWC proceedings, see G-26 (Pts. 2 & 3)/1942, pp. 369-71.
158. See in AICC, G-26 (Pts. 2 & 3)/1942, pp. 345-7, 369-71.
159. Gandhiji's letter was dated 30 December 1941, the same was the date of the Bardoli Resolution. It was first printed as a sort of appendix to the Resolution. See in AICC, G-26 (Pts. 2 & 3)/1942 pp. 347-9.
160. We have accepted 23 December 1941, as the date of the publication of Gandhiji's pamphlet *Constructive Programme*, on the basis of a United Press news report on it, dated Bardoli, 23 December 1941, printed in extenso in the *Modern Review*, January 1942, pp. 8-9. For the text of this pamphlet, see Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VI, pp. 17-32. Gandhiji wrote it in the train while travelling from Wardha to Bardoli.

Chapter VI

The Quit India Movement, 1942

Bhupen Qanungo

IN SIZE AND INFLUENCE, the Indian National Congress was the greatest of all-India political organizations pledged to national independence, unity, and secular welfare of the masses. The Congress was never a one-opinion party in regard to political methods and programming of the freedom struggle. In 1942, the plural-opinion character of the Congress was obvious; as in past years, this feature contributed to its progress and the political education of the nationalists in and outside the party organization. A subtle but widely-felt Congress ethos and one super-Congressman, Gandhi, whom the world knew as the greatest Indian nationalist leader living, were the two most powerful forces holding the Congress together in 1942. A sense of manifest destiny for the Indian people under the leadership of the Indian National Congress was a marked element in the Congress ethos by 1939. The Second World War added a sense of urgency to the freedom struggle in India as in other parts of the world. Anyone who lived in India and read the daily newspapers in English and Indian languages during the Second World War years felt the impact of world events on Indian nationalism; there was a general agreement among educated Indians that the assertion of national self-respect was good and that without political action demonstrating to the world that India was impatient for independence, public opinion in England and America would not, even after the war, consider Indian independence as an item of importance in the post-war settlement of the world to be made by Great Britain and her great Allies: America, Russia and China.

A demand that the British Government should declare without delay and in unequivocal language the independence of India and in the interim period take steps for an orderly transfer of power to a provisional broad-based National Government of India, and in return take the aid of nationalist India in the war Britain was waging in the name of freedom and democracy and Western liberal civilization, was the essen-

tial substance of the resolutions on the political situation which the Indian National Congress adopted in its Working Committee and All India Congress Committee, in the period from after the outbreak of the war in Europe in 1939 to the Quit India Resolution of August 1942. The operative parts of these resolutions, when they were not merely explanatory, did indicate, occasionally, Congress readiness to resort to the sanctions of non-violent resistance, non-cooperation and civil disobedience also. However, it could hardly be said that the Congress adopted a position *vis-à-vis* the British Government of complete or one hundred per cent active opposition to the British exploitation of Indian resources for Britain's wars in Europe, Africa and Asia. A concern for the Allied cause was a genuine part of the Congress attitude towards the war. By the summer of 1942, however, most Congressmen in the All India Congress Committee came to feel that the British Government little appreciated the value of an alliance between the Congress and the Government of India for organizing national defence against the threat to India's security posed by Japan's obvious air, naval and military superiority at that time in the Bay of Bengal and Burma. Congressmen and others genuinely believed that a simple sentence in a solemn declaration by the British Government to the effect that India was freed from political slavery could electrify, as nothing else possibly could, the entire people. It could remove the ill-will against the government, which had been using the Defence of India Rules methodically, since 1939, against nationalist Indians. An unequivocal promise of independence could have immediately generated an upsurge of emotion and activity for the defence of India in alliance with the British, Chinese, Russian and American people.

A two-word slogan, 'Quit India', seemed to Gandhi and numerous Congressmen and Congress sympathizers, especially the youth of India, in 1942, to cut clean the Gordian knot of British-Indian politics of legal phrasemongering. The cry of Quit India, raised not many months after British civilians and military had fled in disorder from Malaya and Burma, carried a suggestion of discourtesy and challenge which hurt the self-esteem of the British Government at home and the *izzat* (sense of honour) of the Government of India, and led them to put into operation a plan of 'Lightning War' (drawn up in the autumn of 1939) for crushing the Congress, their main political 'enemy' in India. But the Quit India slogan aided Congressmen to whip up, among bewildered and apathetic followers and the youth, enthusiasm for a mass movement under the Congress Tricolour, which Gandhi, the Master of Satyagraha, had purposefully refused to lead in 1939, 1940, and 1941, in spite of strong pressure from sections of Congressmen whom he bundled under the label 'the violence party', ignoring the finer points in their assorted political pleas. Little could be done without Gandhi's involvement in the

matter of mass satyagraha. At times, the mahatma, grand, old and precious (even the British Government, though unkind to many, handled Gandhi with 'kid gloves on'), was the despair of Congress leaders. In 1939, Subhas Chandra Bose was in the political wilderness mainly because he ate his heart out for a mass movement of the sort Gandhiji ultimately permitted in August 1942; and by the summer of 1942, Rajaji went into a similar wilderness because the mahatma publicly discountenanced Rajaji's campaign to win support for the revival of the parliamentary programme and his politics of alliance-seeking with the Muslim League and an unregenerated Government of India.

Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal, both of whom had pleaded in vain with Gandhi in the Working Committee in the spring of 1940 to lead a mass satyagraha, were first taken aback by Gandhi's stand that he must call for mass satyagraha, with or without Congress involvement, to strengthen urgently the popular will to liberty and the spirit of sacrifice among the masses. For the past two years he had been urging preparations for satyagraha, and in 1940-1 he had conducted a marvellously disciplined Individual Satyagraha Movement by selected Congressmen, hoping that Great Britain would do the right thing by Indian nationalism in this world war. Now, in the summer of 1942, he set himself to make the necessary preparations for satyagraha *en masse*.

A sense of timing a satyagraha was one of the special qualities which Gandhi claimed for himself as the original and grand satyagrahi, and the Congress as a body could not dispute this claim.

As I talked to Mahatma Gandhi and tried to follow his argument, I saw a passion in his eyes and also heard it in his words; and I knew that that passion was the passion of India — the passion that is moving vast numbers of Indians today. In a much smaller measure, I too have experienced that passion and I know what it means. Before that mighty urge of the people petty arguments and controversies become small and without much meaning. This is the fundamental aspect of the Indian problem today, and if we lose sight of it and become involved in the smaller aspects of the question, over which we may or may not differ, then we err grievously.

With these words, Jawaharlal announced, at an interview to the press at Bombay on 16 June 1942, that, when it came, Gandhiji's call to action would lead him and thousands of other Indians to brave whatever physical sufferings the British Indian police, jails, and Defence Rules, would inflict on freedom fighters.¹

By July, Congress leaders in every province were asking the people to support Gandhiji in his last campaign. Of the organization men in the Congress none was more formidable a worker, and more obedient to Gandhi in times of crises in the Congress, than his famed Sardar Patel.

In August 1942, because of his zeal for the Quit India Movement and quick success in arousing popular enthusiasm in Gujarat and Bombay, the Government of India in the Home Department was inclined to hold Vallabhbhai Patel as a Congress leader more dangerous to the British than Jawaharlal Nehru, the idol of the nationalist youth, both of the left and the right. The mahatma's deputy in Bihar, Babu Rajendra Prasad, quickened the spirit of sacrifice among nationalists in the province which gave much trouble to the local authorities and suffered most from police atrocities in the Quit India Movement. Gandhi's messengers toured the provinces, while the mahatma explained his position in a series of striking articles in the *Harijan*, to prepare ground for mass civil disobedience.

Of course, once he started meditating, with pen in hand or in the company of those who made the pilgrimage to Wardha, on the subject of a mass nationalist movement for freedom, Gandhi was one of the glories of Indo-British civilization and the most dangerous man for the British imperialism in 1942. The 'Gandhi Problem' of the Government of India thus became acute once again. From May 1942 to March 1943, from about the time Gandhi sounded with a flourish the call of the Quit India movement to the time of his epic fast, which was its prayerful soul-stirring finale, the Government of India in the Home Department was not a little embarrassed by the Gandhi problem, considered as a major part of the Congress problem, testing the quality of British statesmanship at New Delhi and in London.

From an administrative point of view, the government succeeded in aborting the Quit India Movement as planned by Gandhi and the Congress by banning the main committees of the Congress, and putting into jail, on 9 August and the following days, the members of the Congress Working Committee, the All India Congress Committee, the members of the provincial Congress committees, the best organizers among district Congress committees, and others listed by the police. Mahatma Gandhi, and Maulana Azad, the Congress President, and his Working Committee were arrested at Bombay on 9 August 1942. But by 'beheading' the Congress movement projected by the Quit India Resolution of 8 August, the British Government produced overnight as it were an angry hydraheaded popular Quit India Movement in which, to no small annoyance of the police, students and the youth were in command. They played a conspicuous part in demonstrations of revolutionary temper, organizing attempts by large groups of militant demonstrators to fly the Congress flag on government buildings, various acts of sabotage, especially of railways, telephone and telegraph services, attacks on police parties and police stations, wherever convenient, and attempts made, notably in the eastern districts of the United Provinces, in several

parts of Bihar and in the Midnapore district of Bengal, to defy British rule and government servants, Indian and European.

After the youth and the common people took up the cry of Quit India in the mofussil, and not merely in the administrative centres of the Indian empire, the empire could only be held by more and more assertion of authority by naked force, a situation distasteful to numerous servants of the empire. After the Quit India Movement, fewer educated Indians could possibly say, without a secret sense of shame, that the British should not quit India in an orderly fashion, or that the existing political servitude was acceptable to their countrymen, or that the Cripps Mission offer of a 'post-dated cheque' combined with the crush-the-Congress policy could succeed in maintaining honourably the Indian connexion with the British people.

The Quit India Movement was the biggest step the Indian National Congress took during the Second World War in assertion of India's moral right to independence, to be free, as Gandhiji put it, 'as free as Britain and America were'. Unless this broad historical aspect is appreciated, the Quit India Movement may appear shallow in meaning, no more than a senseless 'Congress Rebellion' vigorously crushed by the Indian police aided by 57 battalions of soldiers employed by the British Government to assert its authority over millions of Indians kept systematically disarmed by Arms Act since the mutinies and rebellions of 1857-8.

1. Congress and the War Effort, a Fresh Appraisal and British Reactions

The first public response of the Congress Working Committee to the release of satyagrahis from prison and the political situation in the country in December 1941, the month the Pacific war broke out, was embodied in the Bardoli Resolutions passed in the last days of the year.² In explaining the Congress position to members of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee at Bardoli on 5 January 1942, Mahatma Gandhi said that the very greatest of Congress leaders were party to the main political resolution, and that it meant that if the British Government would give a guarantee that full freedom would be given to India after the war, the Congress would participate in the allied war effort. His personal position regarding war, Gandhi reminded them, was no part of the debate, and though every group had freedom to convert the Congress to its views by discussion and debate, there should not be any split in the Congress organization. In articles written in the second week of January, Gandhi further explained his idea that the Constructive Programme was the best preparation for Congressmen who must lead the people in facing the impending danger to the country from the east, and



Jawaharlal Nehru, who presided over the Congress session of 1936



Subhas Chandra Bose, who presided over the Congress sessions of 1938 and 1939

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who presided over the Congress session of 1940



Acharya J.B. Kripalani, who presided over the Congress session of 1946





Jawaharlal Nehru being taken in procession, Faizpur, 1936



Subhas Chandra Bose arriving to attend the Congress session, Haripura, 1938



Subhas Chandra Bose, President of the Haripura Congress, is taking the salute, 1938

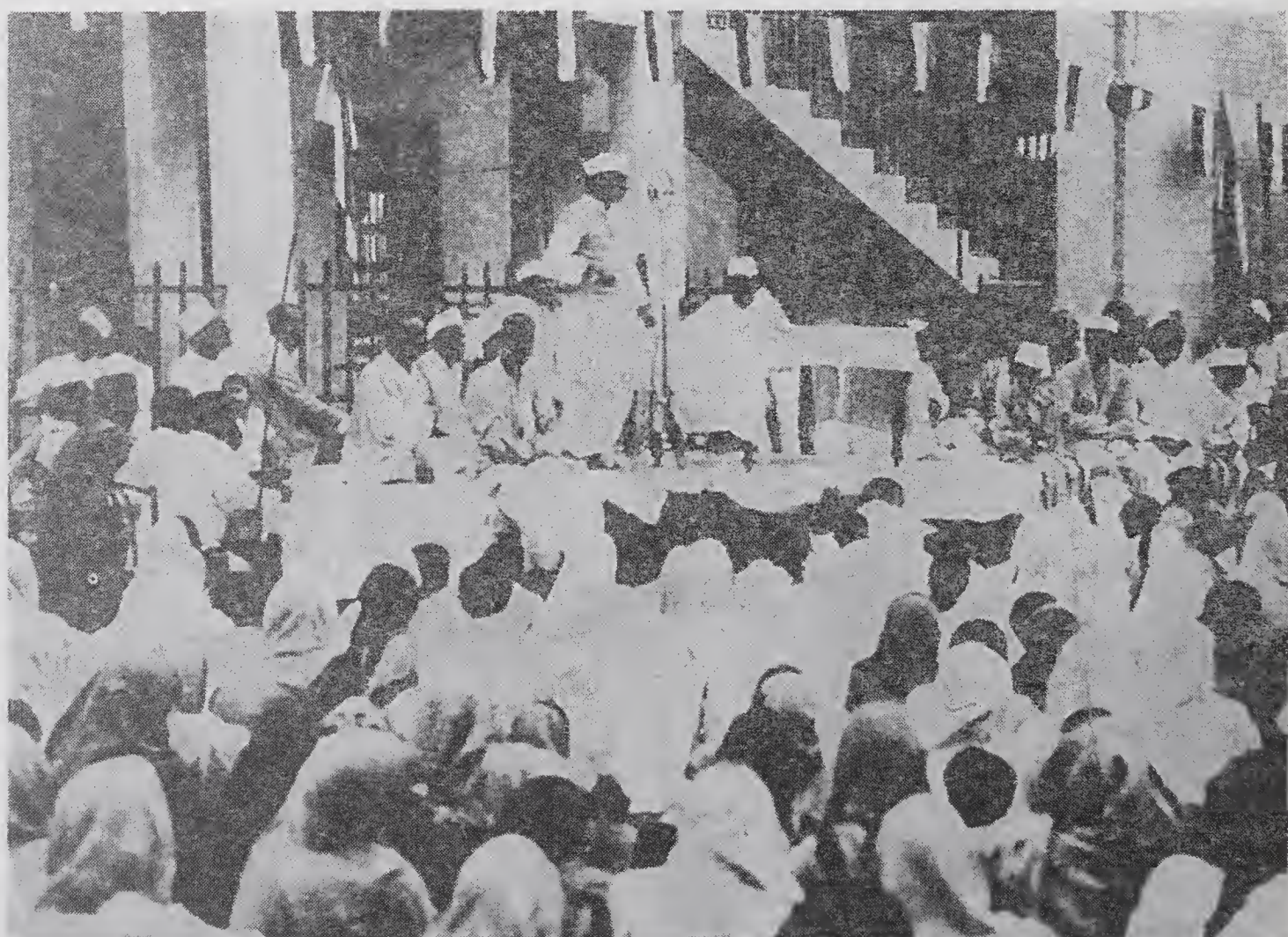


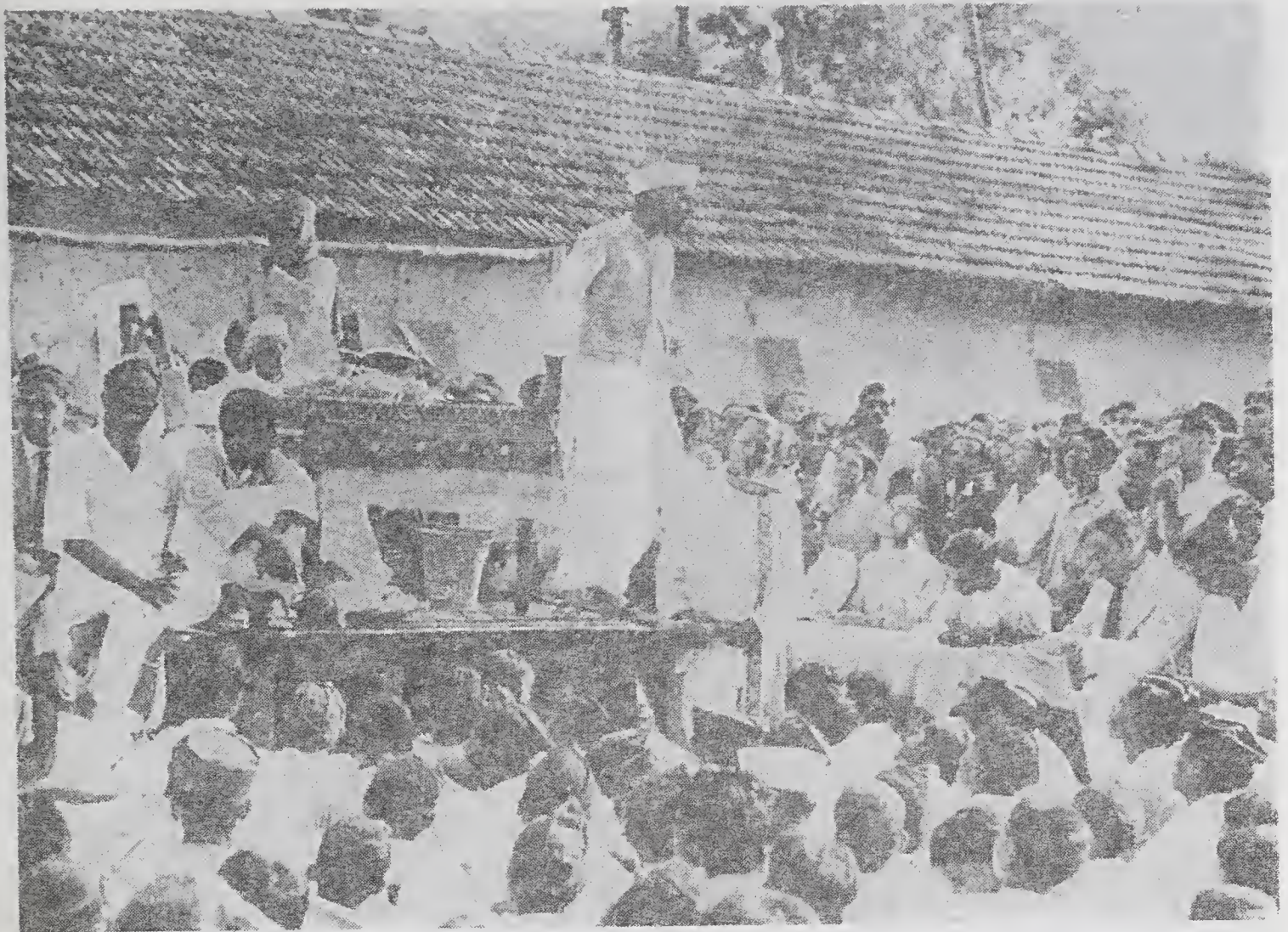
Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the Ramgarh Congress, 1940



Jawaharlal Nehru addressing an election meeting, 1936

Jawaharlal Nehru addressing a meeting at Karachi, 1936

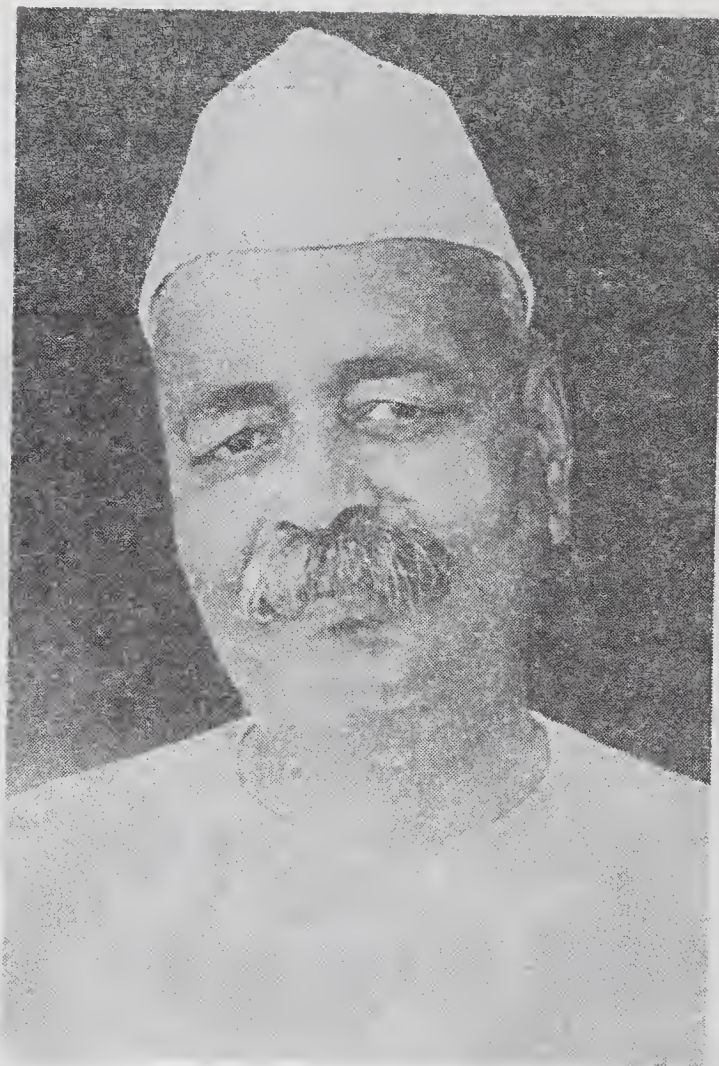




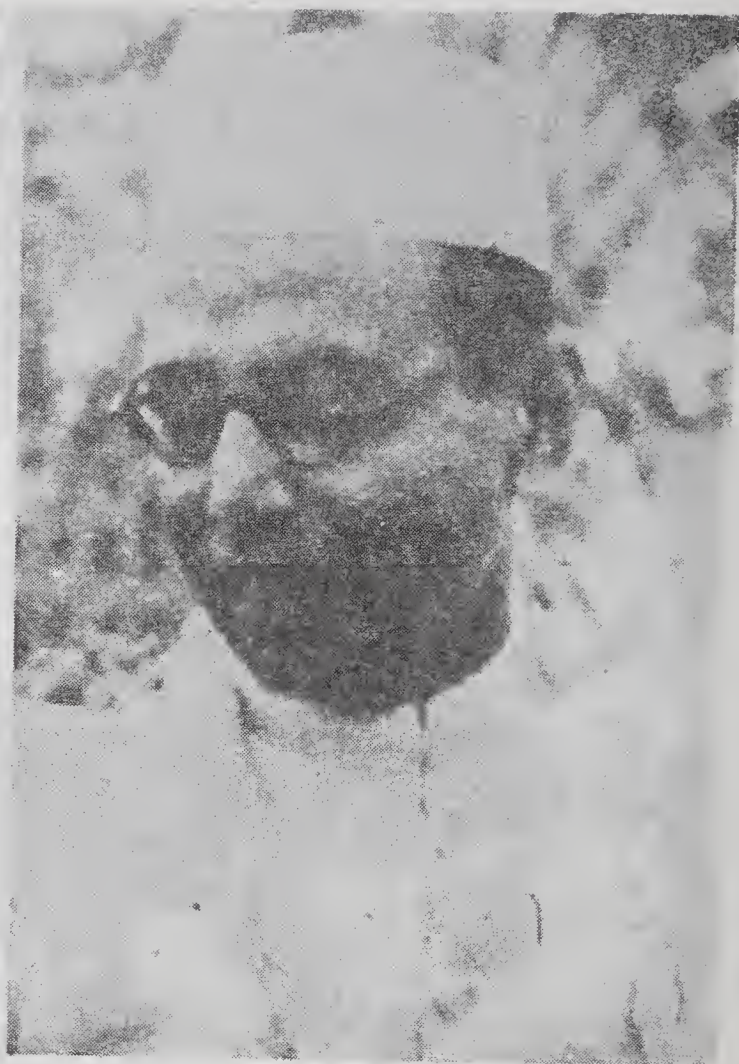
Jawaharlal Nehru addressing an election meeting at Gokulam, Madras, 1936

Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar Khan with Gandhiji, 1937



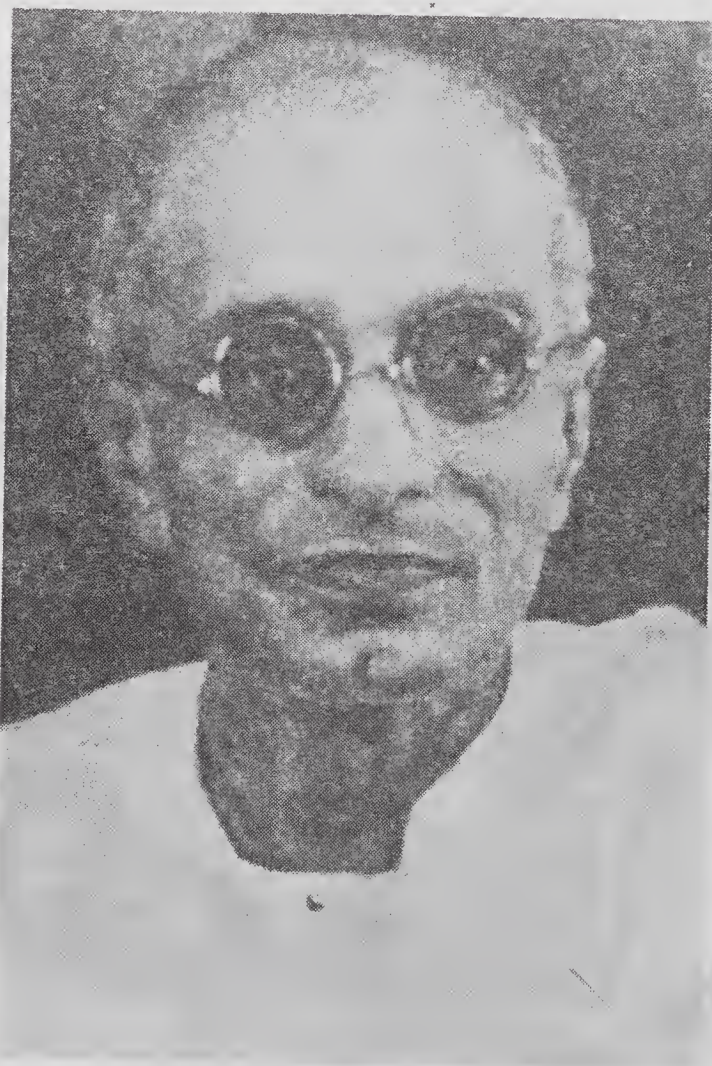


Govind Ballabh Pant, Premier of U.P., 1937-39

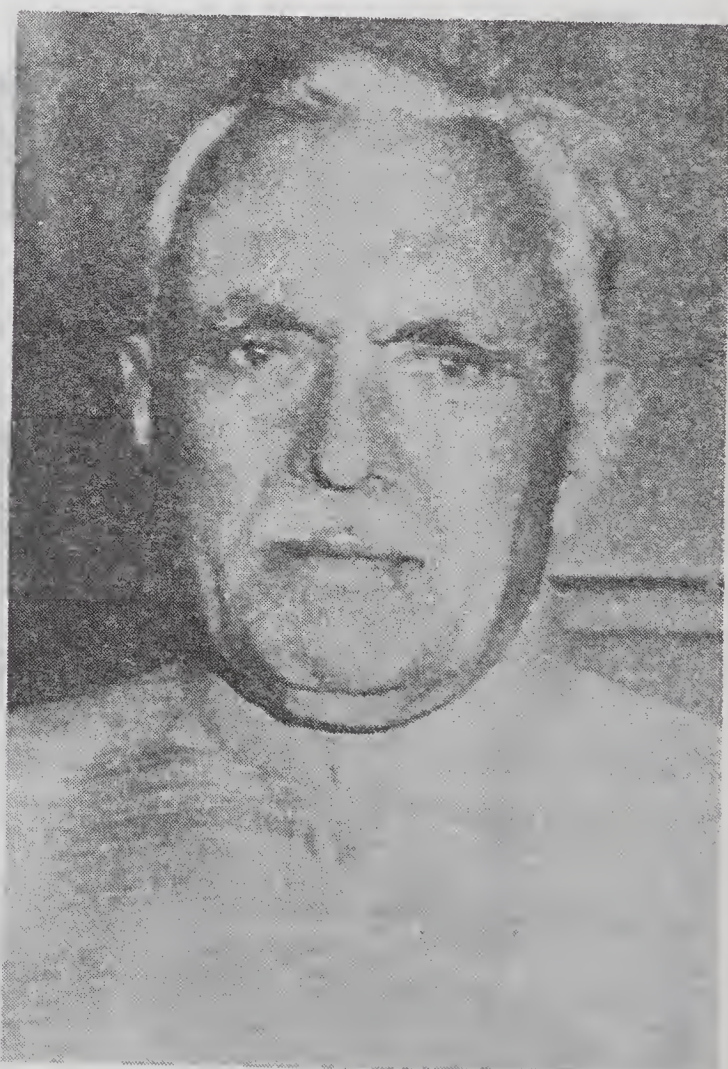


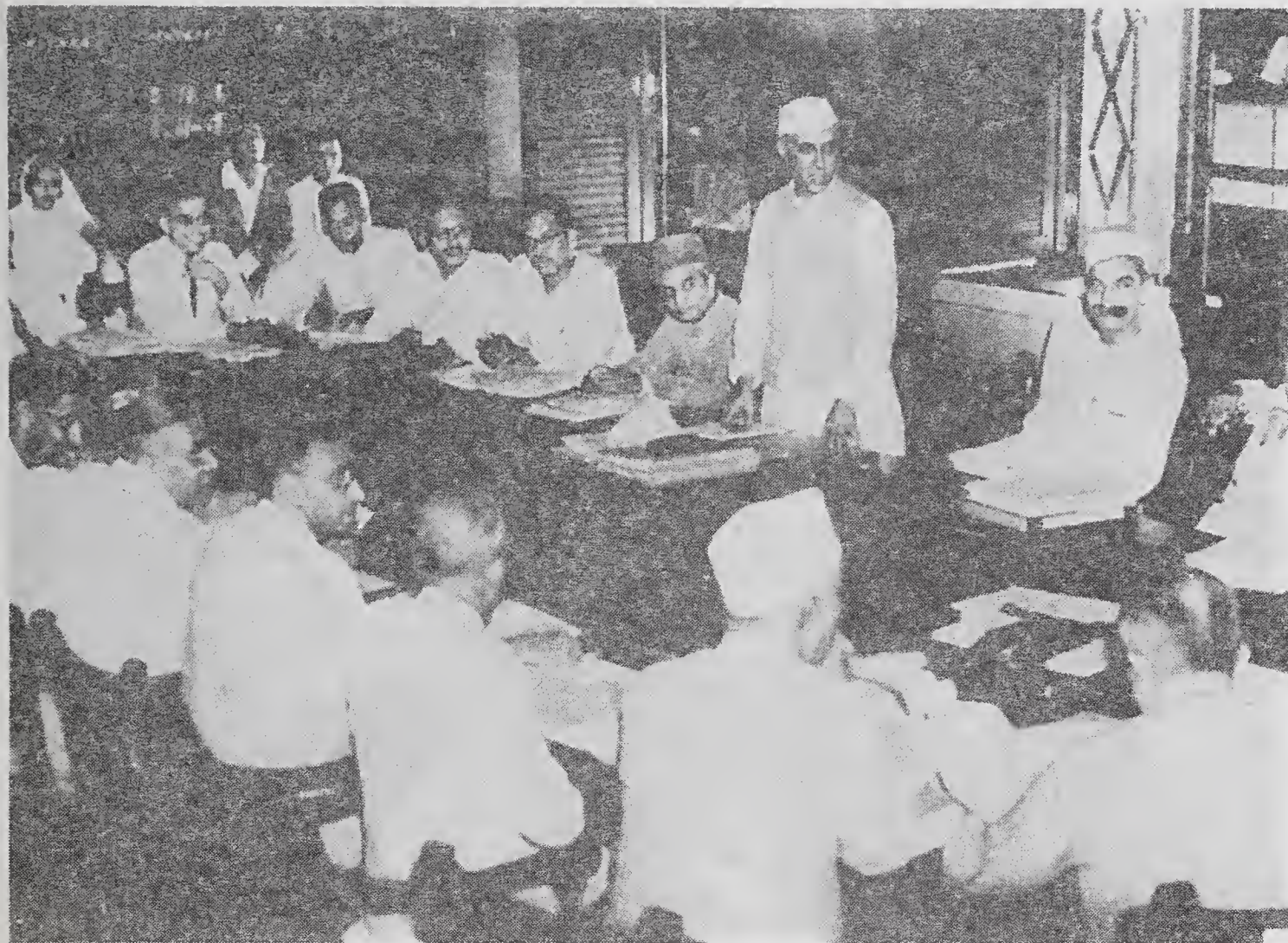
B.G. Kher, Premier of Bombay, 1937-39

C. Rajagopalachari, Premier of Madras, 1937-39



Dr Khan Sahib, Premier of NWFP, 1937-39





Jawaharlal Nehru addressing the National Planning Committee, 1938

Gandhiji, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jamnalal Bajaj at a meeting of the All India State Peoples Conference, Wardha, 1939





Jawaharlal Nehru in Spain, during the Civil War, with General Lister, 1938

Jawaharlal Nehru addressing a meeting at Trafalgar Square, London, in support of the Spanish Republicans, 1938





Jawaharlal Nehru with Nahas Pasha at Heliopolis, 1938



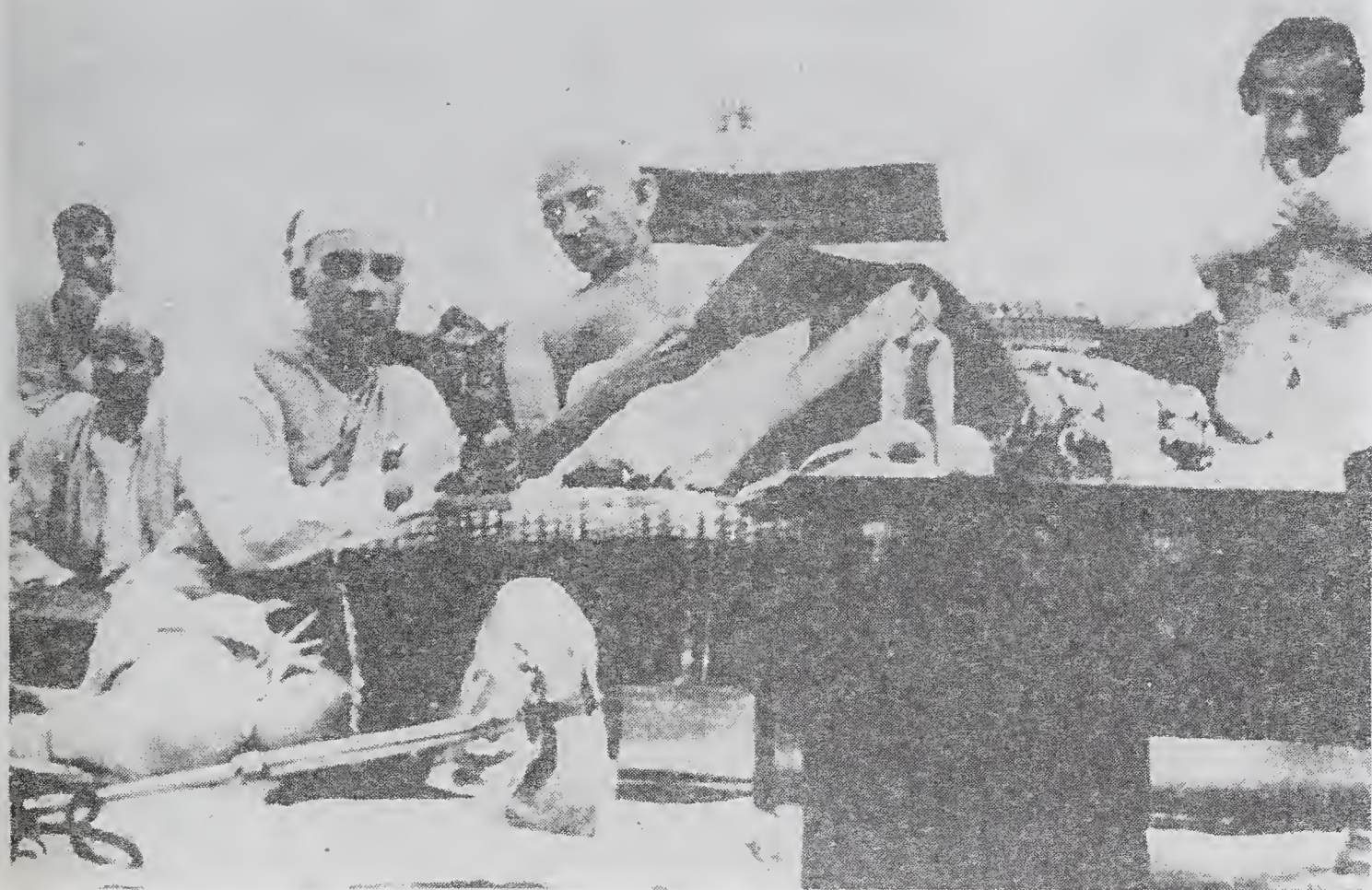
*Jawaharlal Nehru addressing a meeting
Shanghai, 1939*



Vinoba Bhave with Gandhiji, Sevagram, 1941 Gandhiji with Sir Stafford Cripps, 1942

Cripps Mission as seen by Shankar — a cartoon





Jawaharlal Nehru and Acharya J.B. Kripalani with Gandhiji at the Bombay AICC meeting where the Quit India Resolution was passed, 8 August 1942

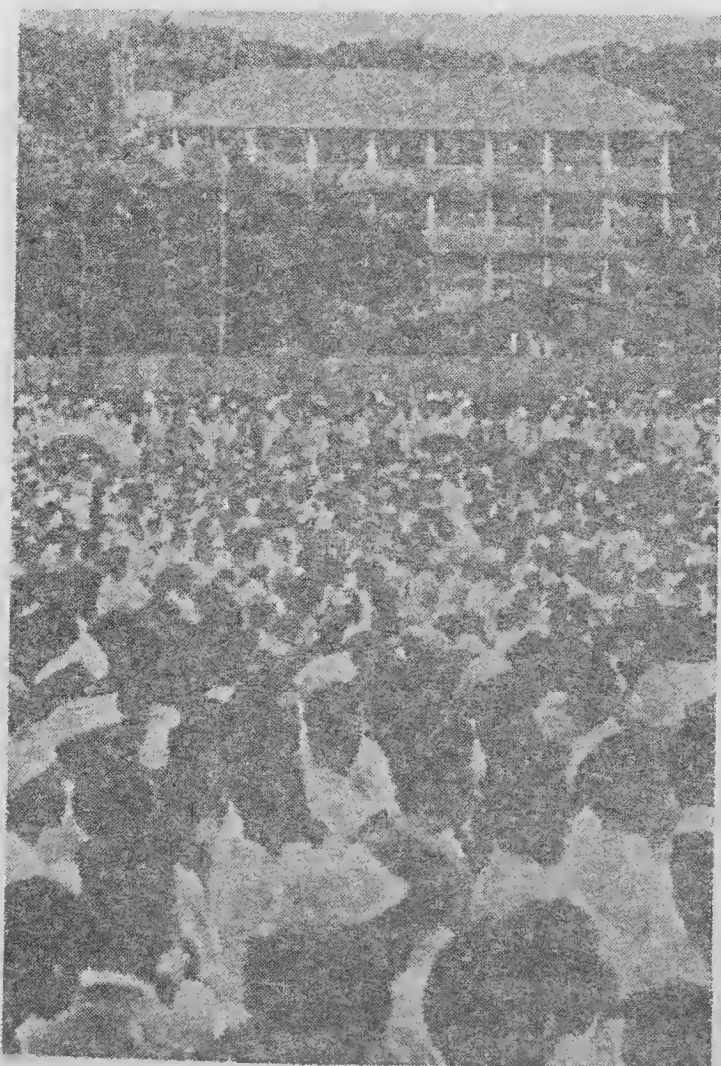
A section of the crowd being dispersed by teargas shells at Bombay, 9 August 1942





A gathering in Bombay in protest against the arrest of national leaders, 1942

A crowd protesting during the 1942 movement



Jayaprakash Narayan, a leader of the Quit India movement

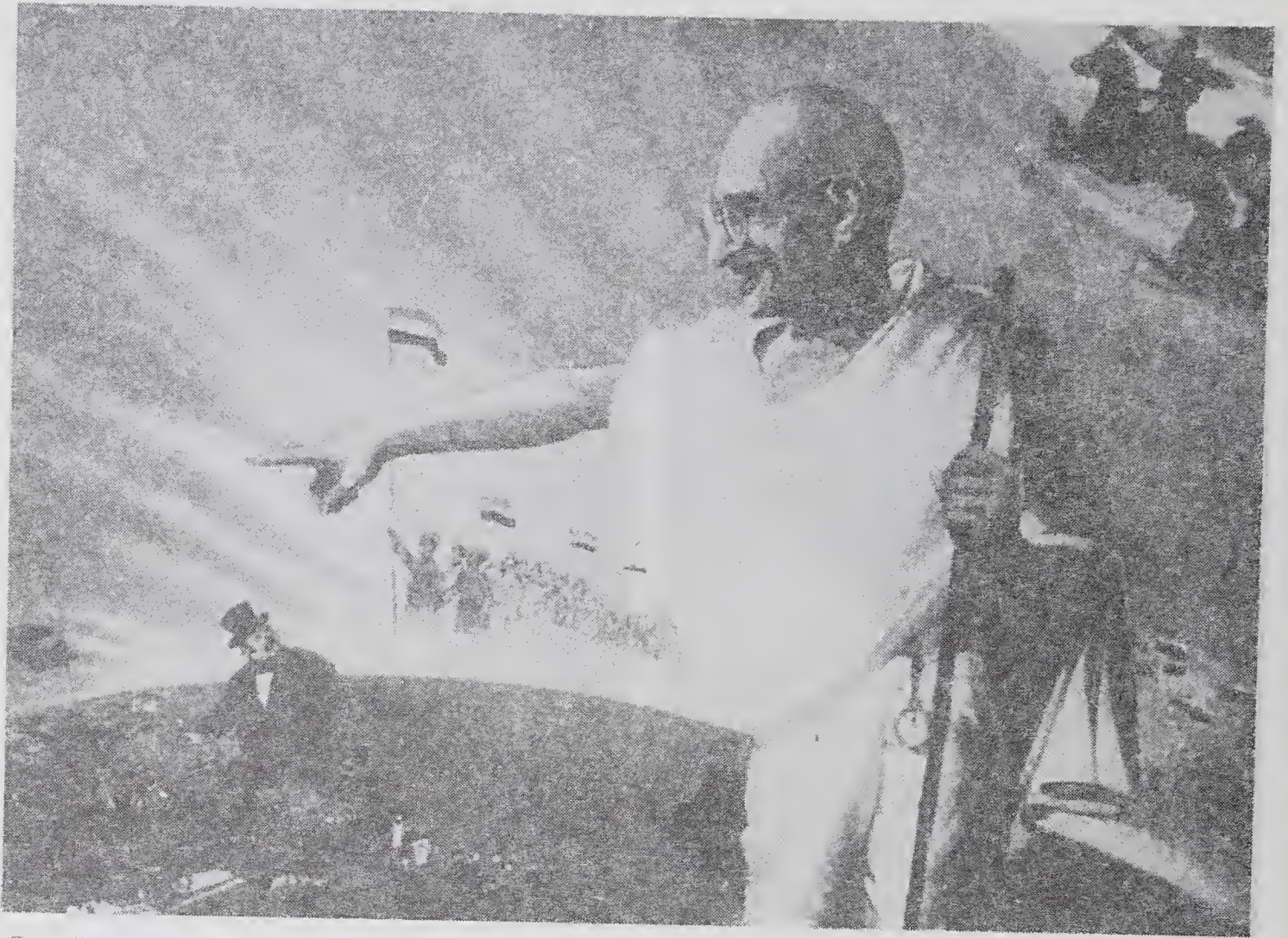




Sucheta Kripalani, a leader of the Quit India movement Aruna Asaf Ali during the 1942 struggle

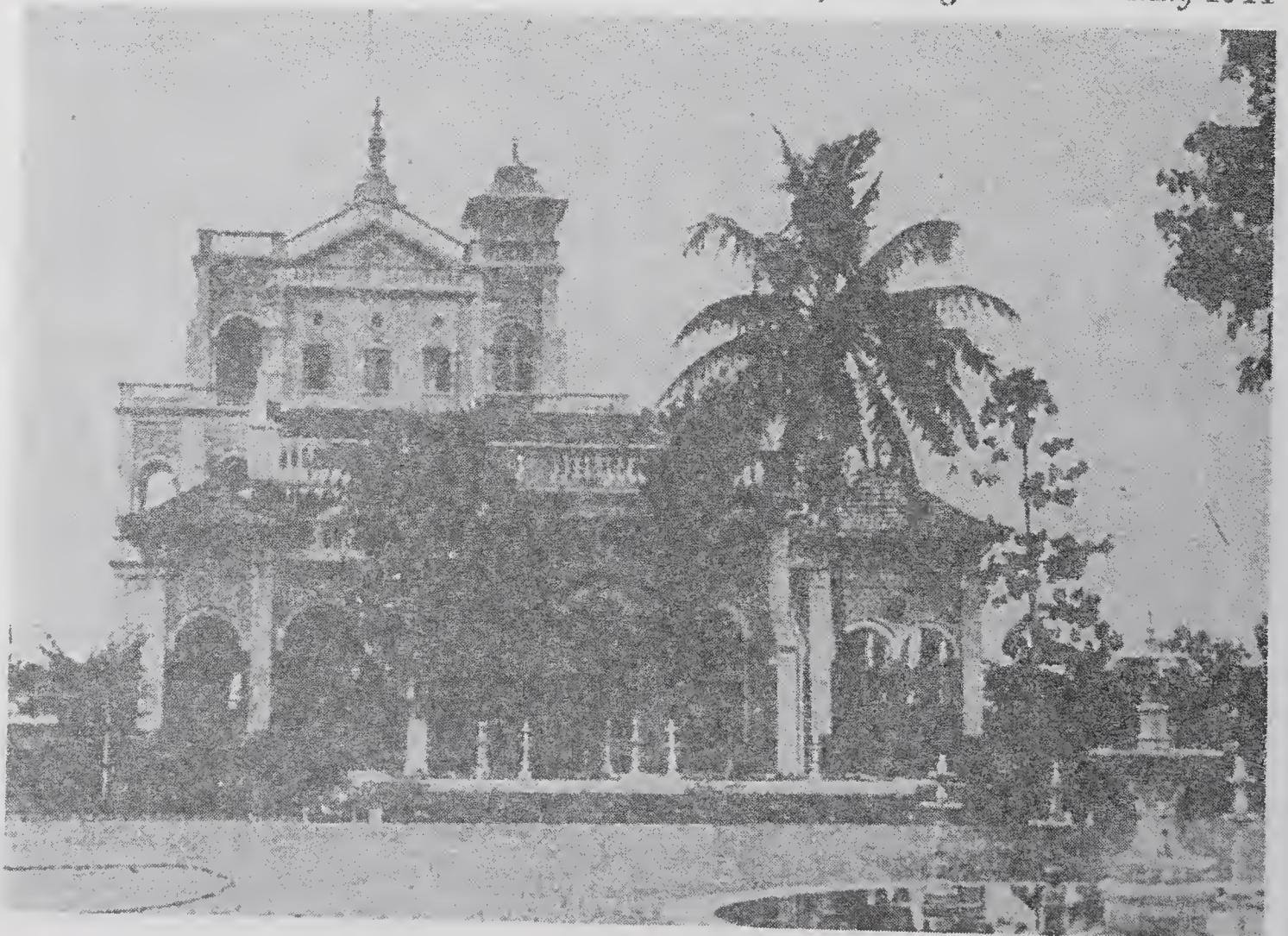
Clash between the police and volunteers during the struggle, 1942





Gandhiji during Quit India movement — A sketch

Aga Khan Palace at Poona where Gandhiji was interned from August 1942 to May 1944



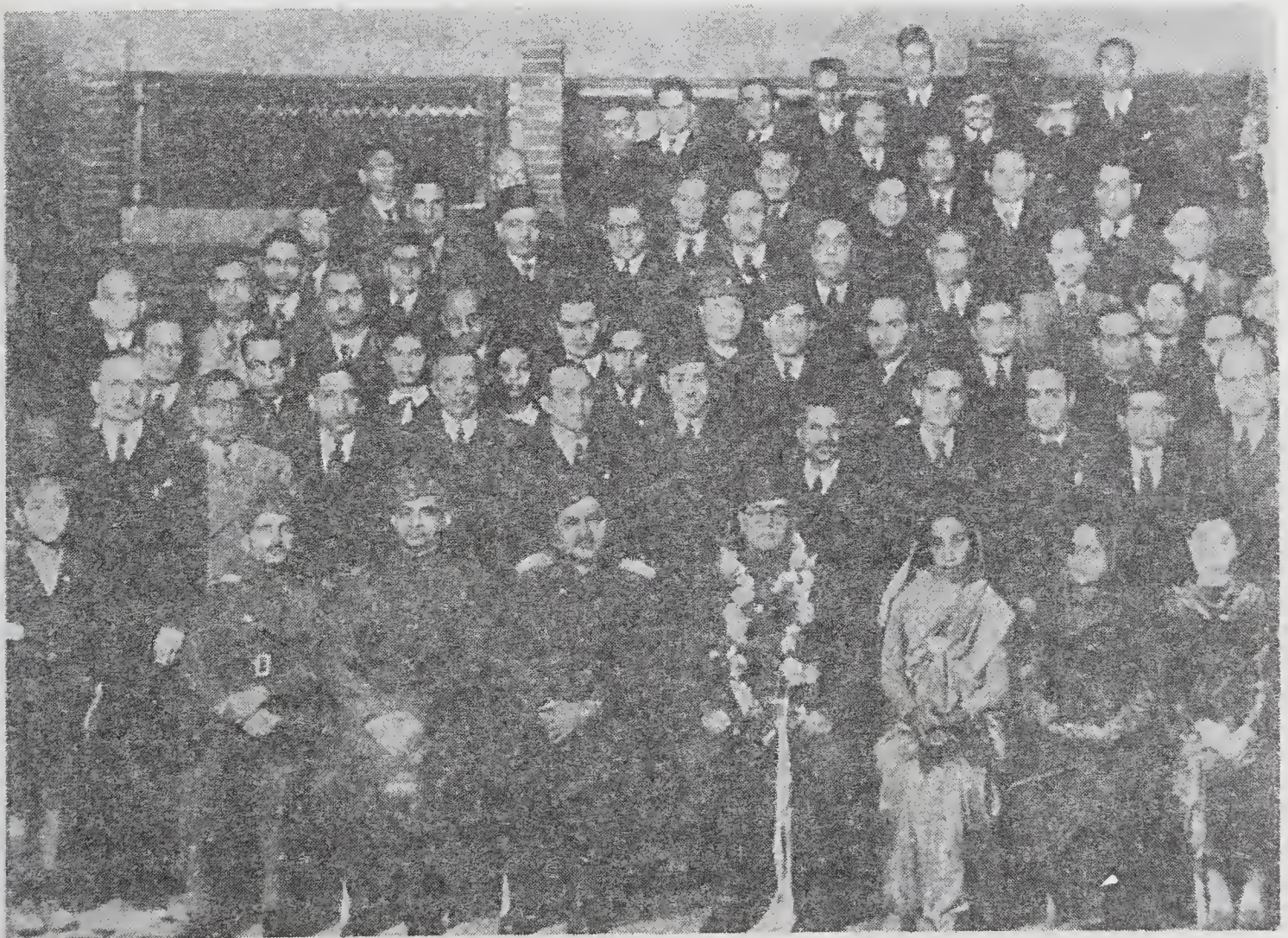


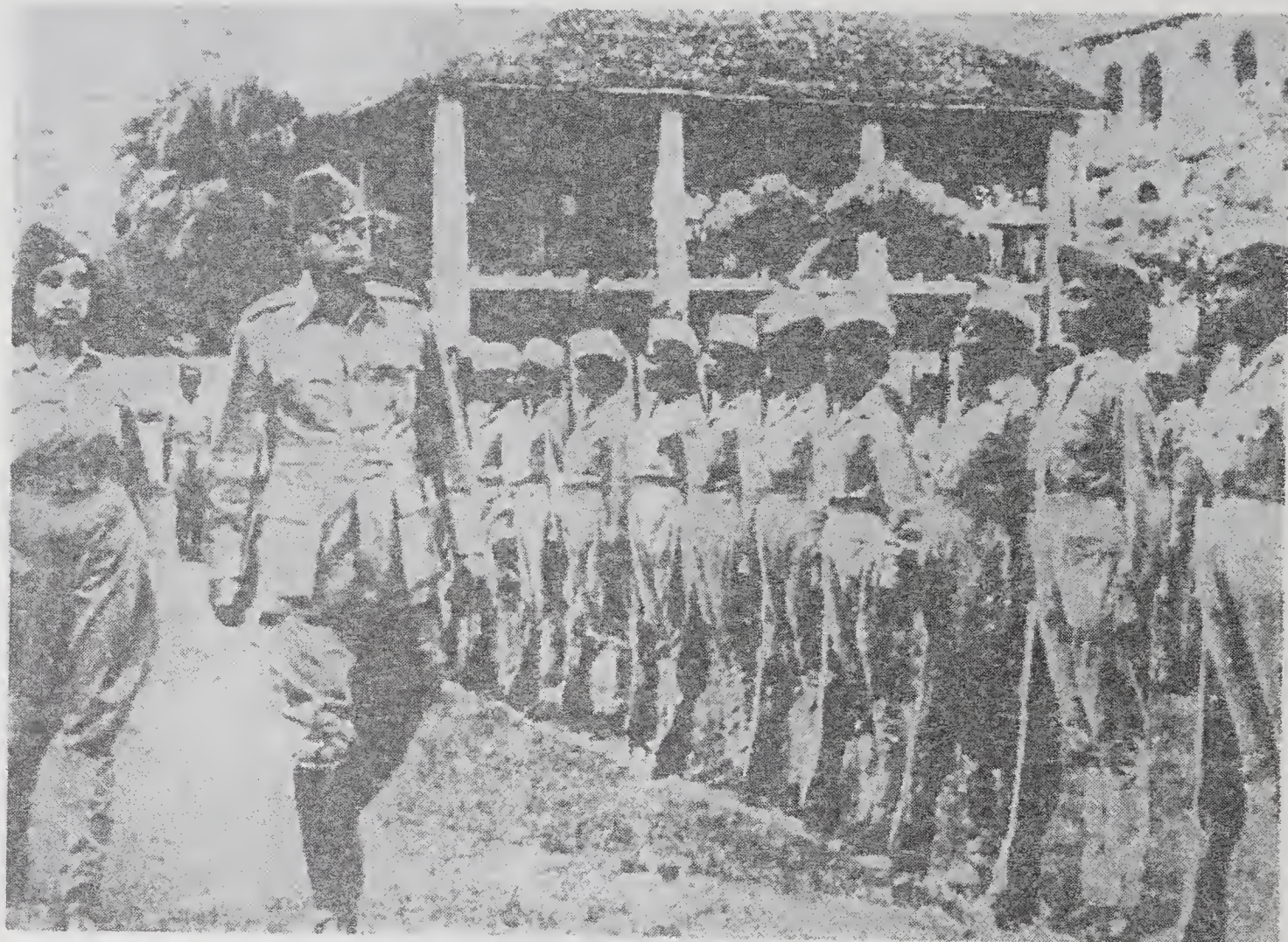
Subhas Chandra Bose as the head of Indian National Army



Subhas Chandra Bose broadcasting from Singapore, 1943

Subhas Chandra Bose with the members of INA





Subhas Chandra Bose inspecting the guard of honour of the women wing of INA

Subhas Chandra Bose at a rally of Indian Women in Singapore



Subhas Chandra Bose taking the salute after the formation of the Azad Hind Government at Singapore, 1943



MOULANA AZAD
RELEASED

[illegible][illegible]

1. Welche Aufgaben haben die folgenden Bauteile?
 2. Wie wird die Wärme im Kessel übertragen?
 3. Welche Sicherheitsvorrichtungen sind vorhanden?
 4. Wie wird das Wasser im Kessel erhitzt?
 5. Welche Vorrichtungen sind für die Wasserversorgung vorhanden?
 6. Wie wird das Wasser im Kessel geleitet?
 7. Welche Vorrichtungen sind für die Wasserversorgung vorhanden?
 8. Wie wird das Wasser im Kessel geleitet?
 9. Welche Vorrichtungen sind für die Wasserversorgung vorhanden?
 10. Wie wird das Wasser im Kessel geleitet?

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2018年12月21日

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Dr. George R. R. Ochs

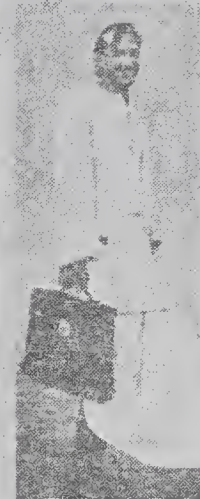


Figure 1



Journal of Management Inquiry 18(1)



Journal of Management Education 26(8)

Newspaper report from the Amrita Bazar Patrika of 16 June 1945

Sikh leaders at Simla, 1945

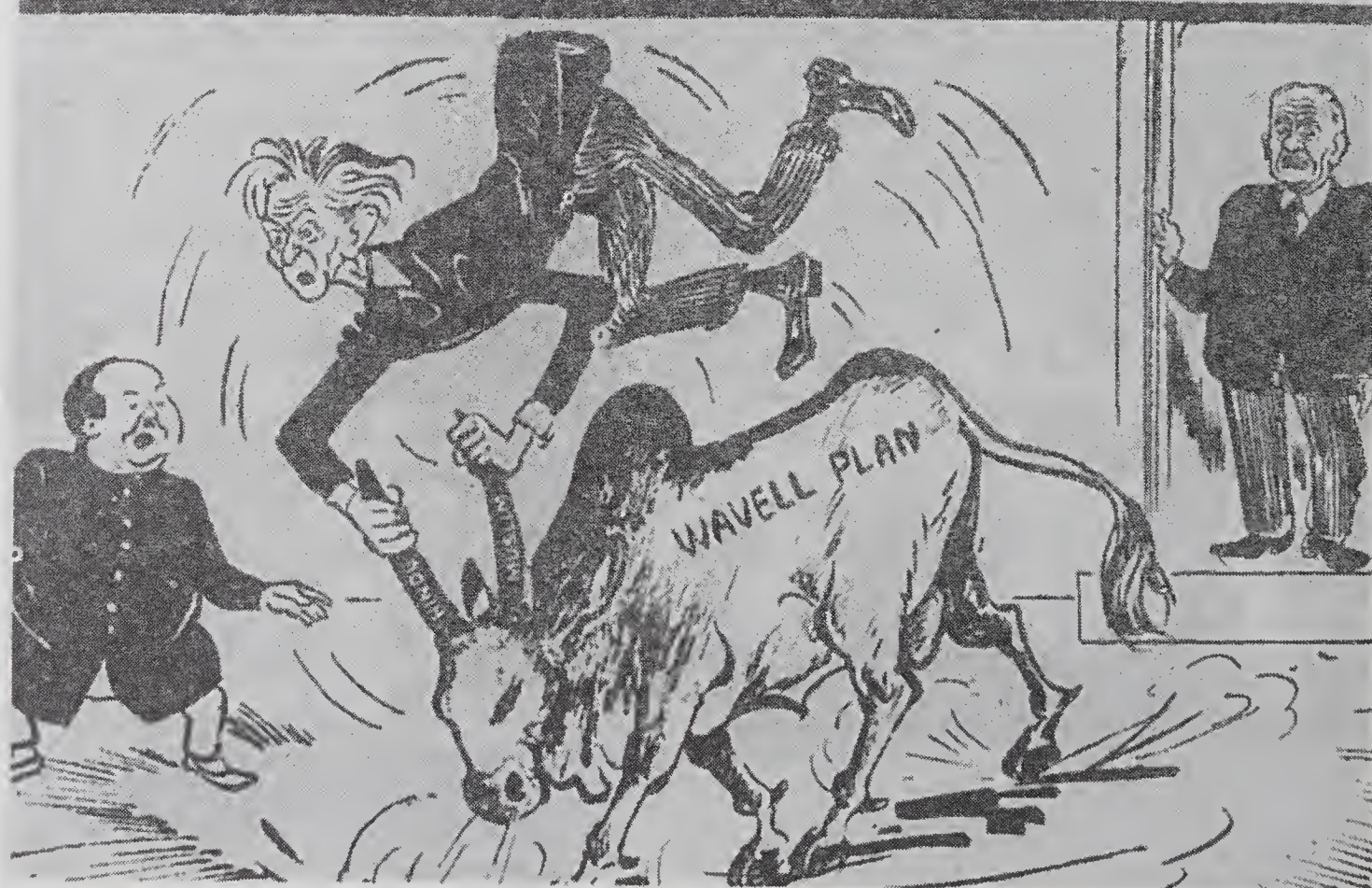




Gandhiji on his way to the Viceregal Lodge, Simla, 1945

Horns of a Dilemma — a cartoon by Shankar

HORNS OF A DILEMMA





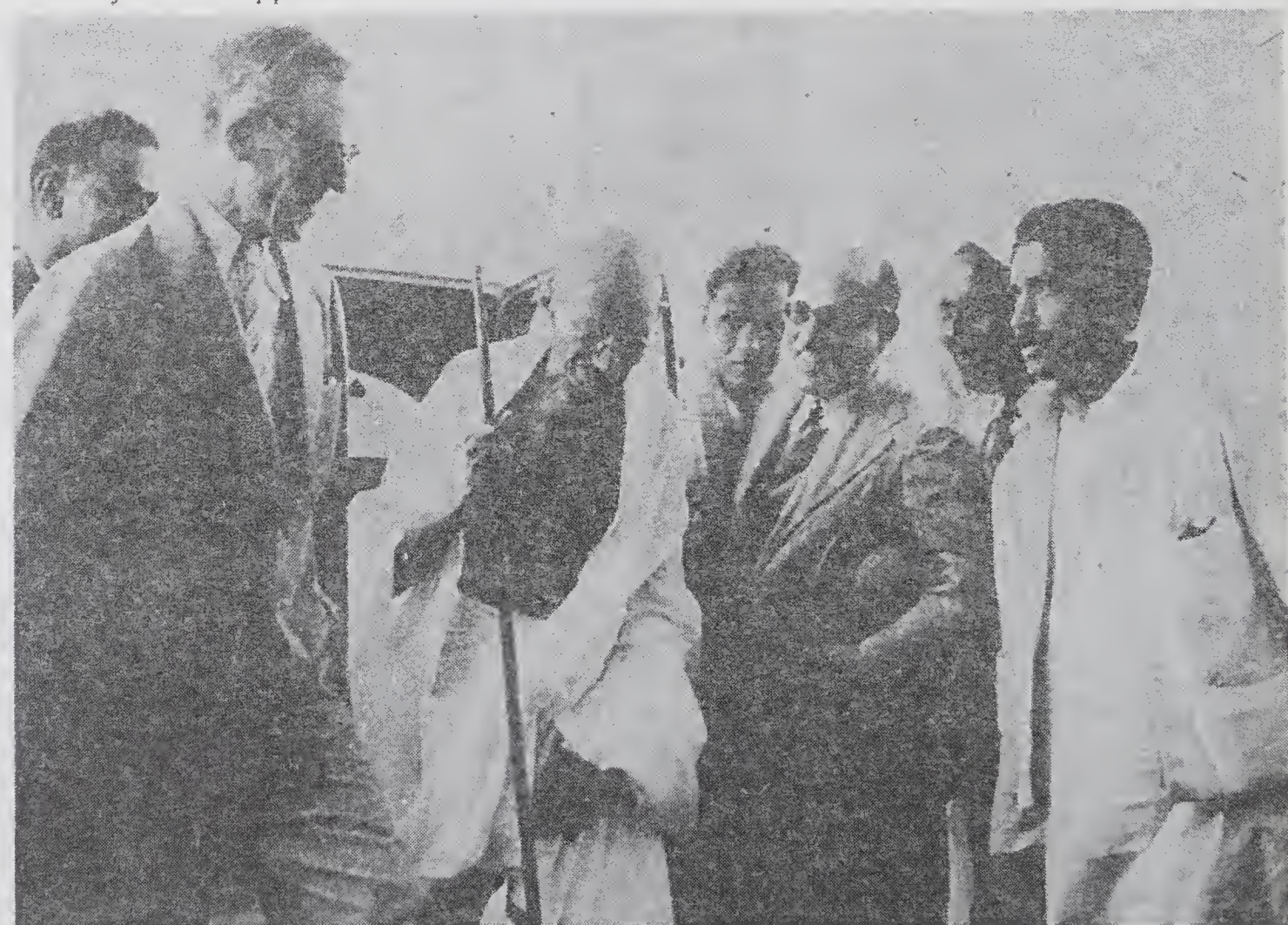
K.N. Katju, T.B. Sapru and Jawaharlal Nehru on their way to Red Fort to defend the INA prisoners' August 1945

RIN mutineers parading street in Bombay, 1946





Gandhiji with members of the British Parliamentary Delegation, 1946



Gandhiji and Cripps, 1946



Gandhiji and Lord Pethick-Lawrence, 1946



Gandhiji welcoming Sir Stafford Cripps at Bhangi Colony, 1946

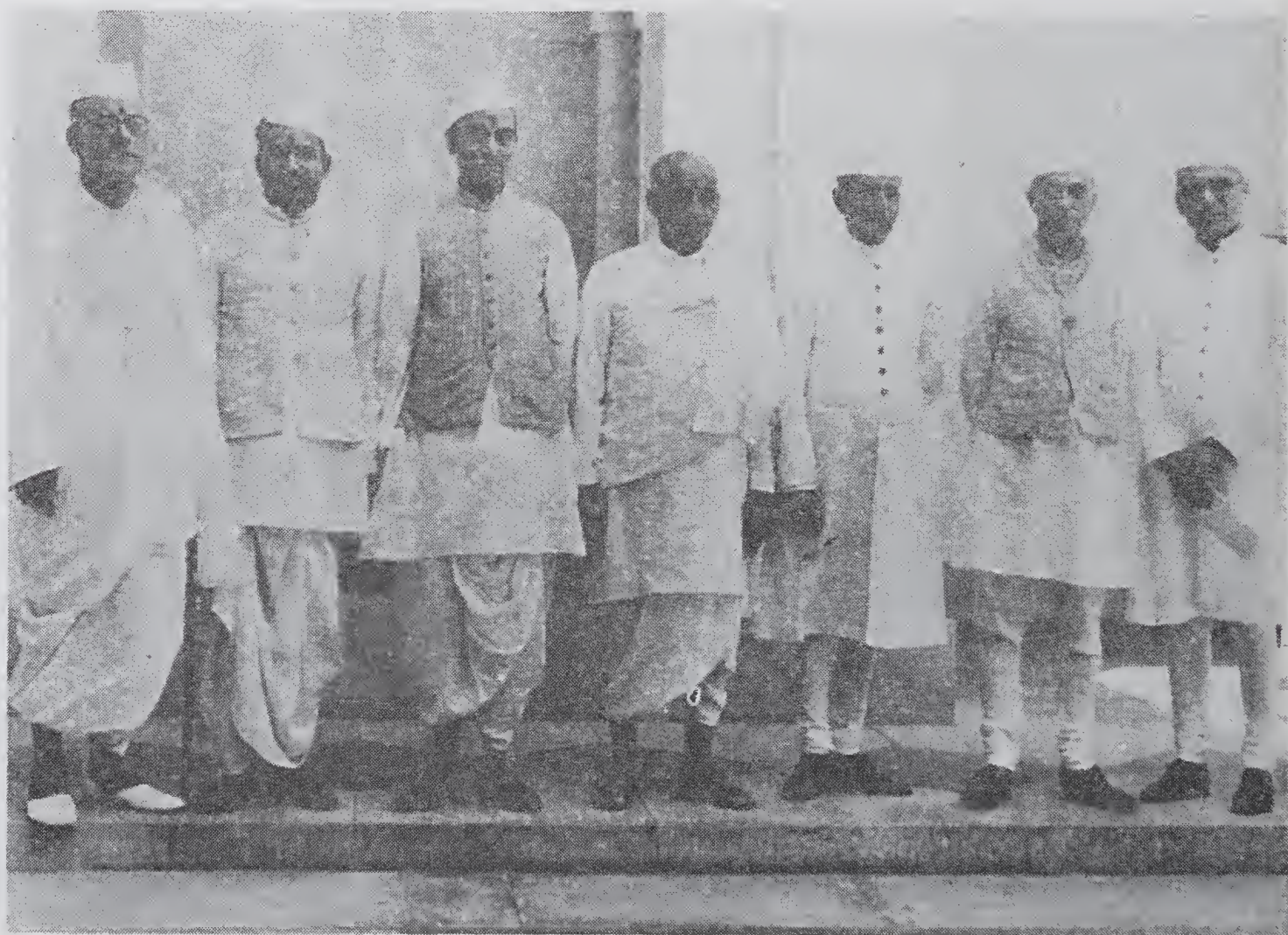


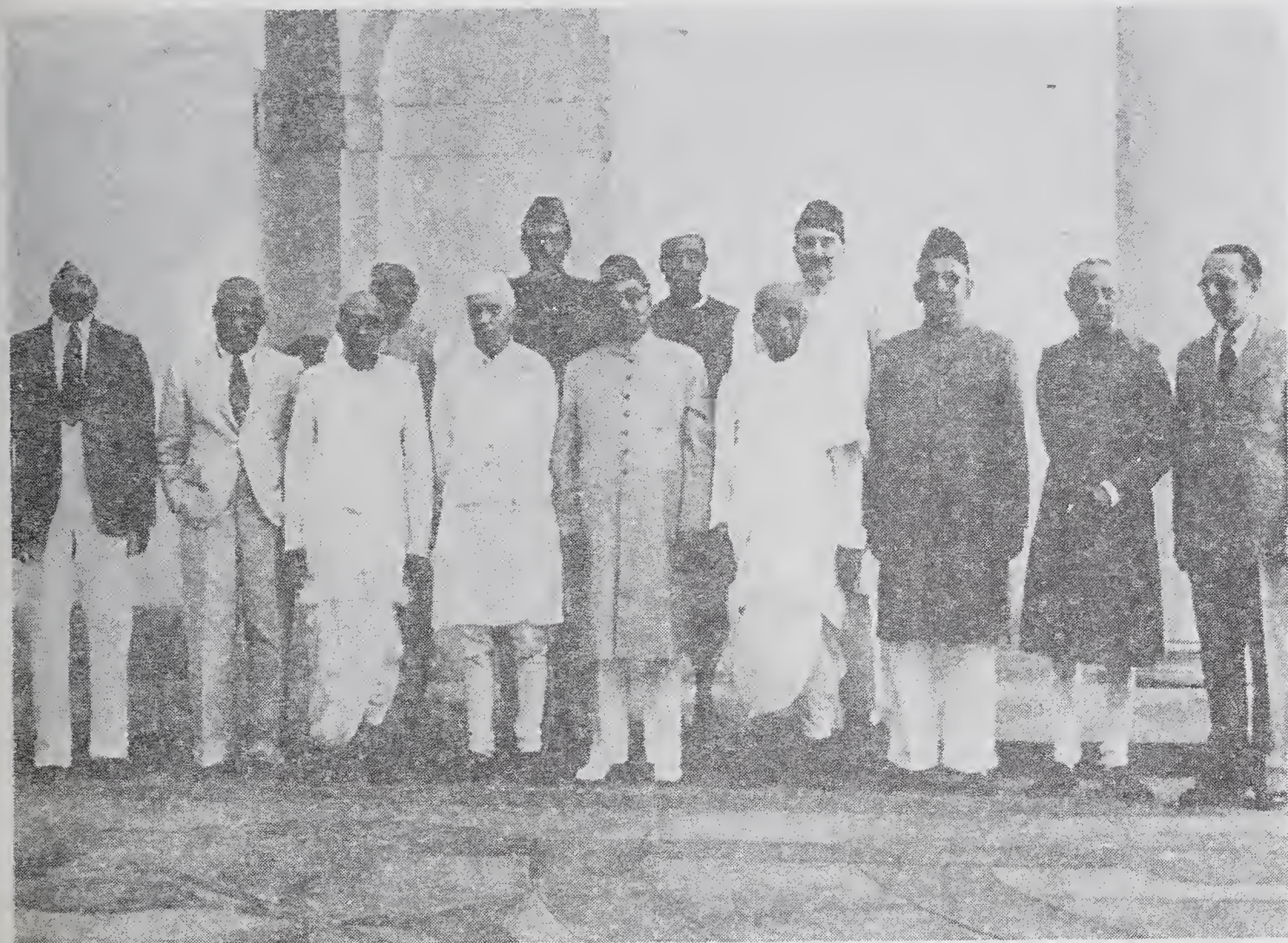
Congress leaders meeting the members of the Cabinet Mission, Simla, 1946



Dr Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru with Lord Wavell, 1947

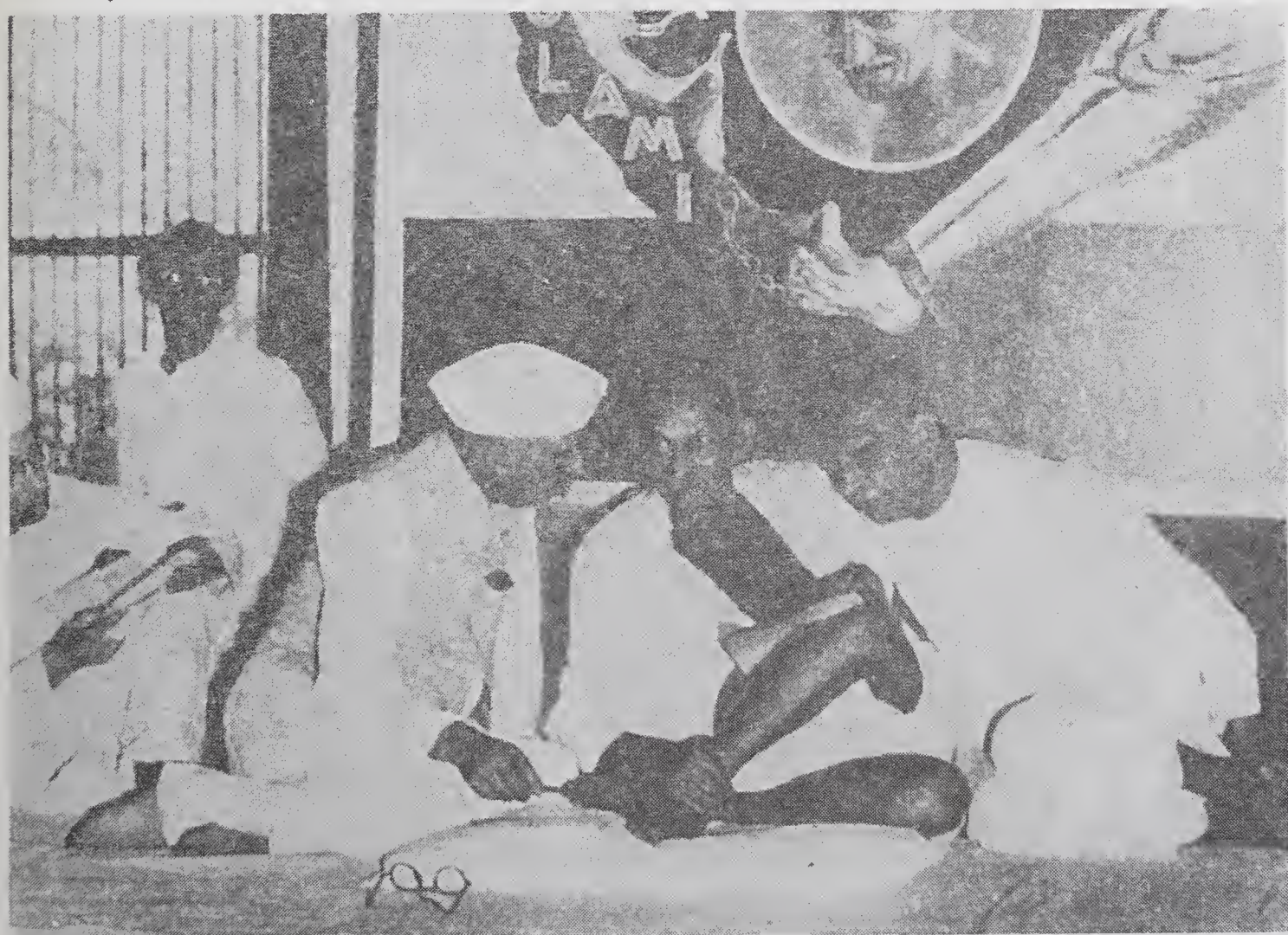
Members of the Interim Government, September 1946





Members of the Interim Government after the joining of the Muslim League, October 1946

Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel at the Delhi AICC, 1946





Gandhiji in Noakhali, 1946

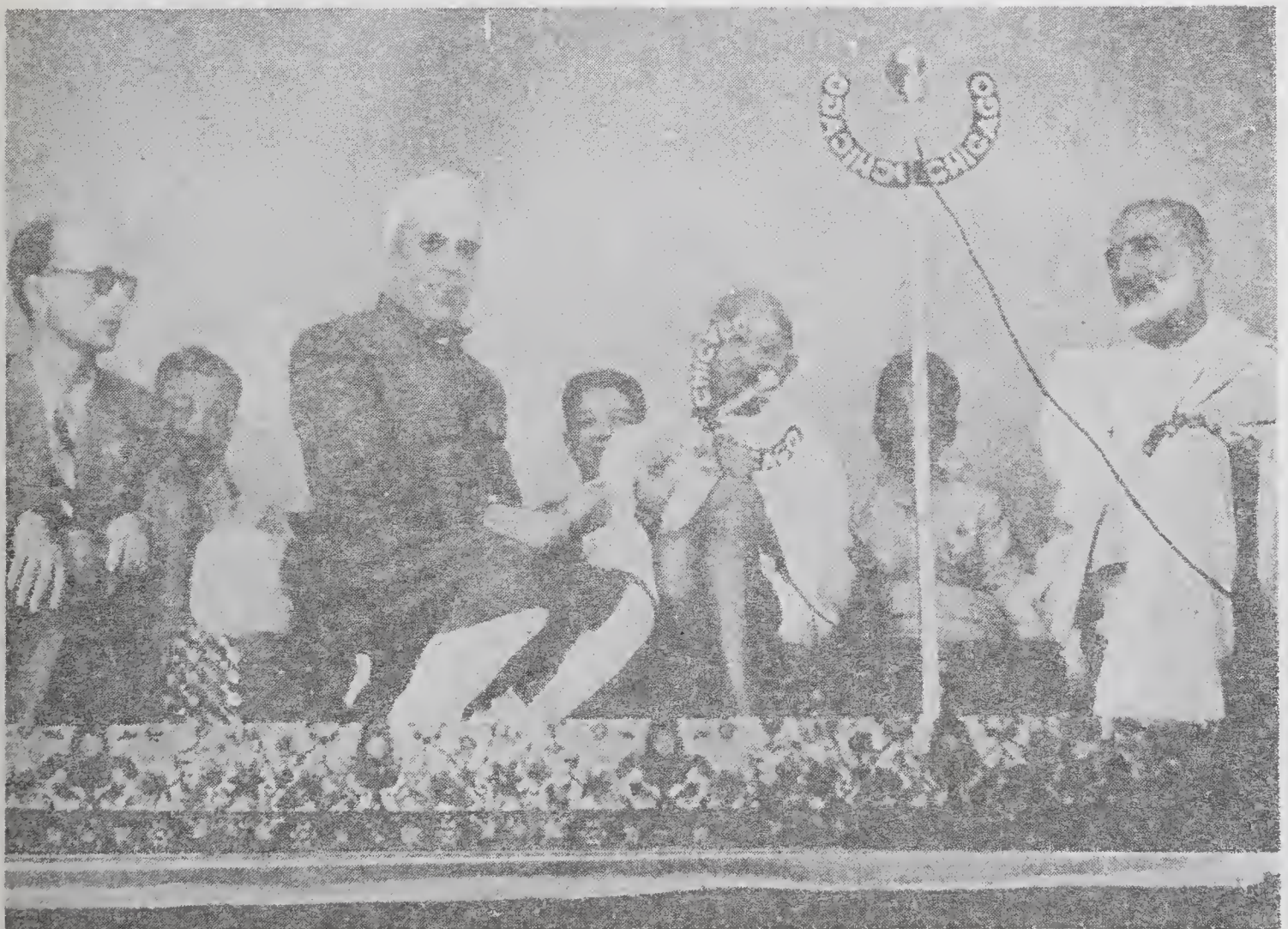
Indian leaders on arrival in London for talks with the British Government, December 1946

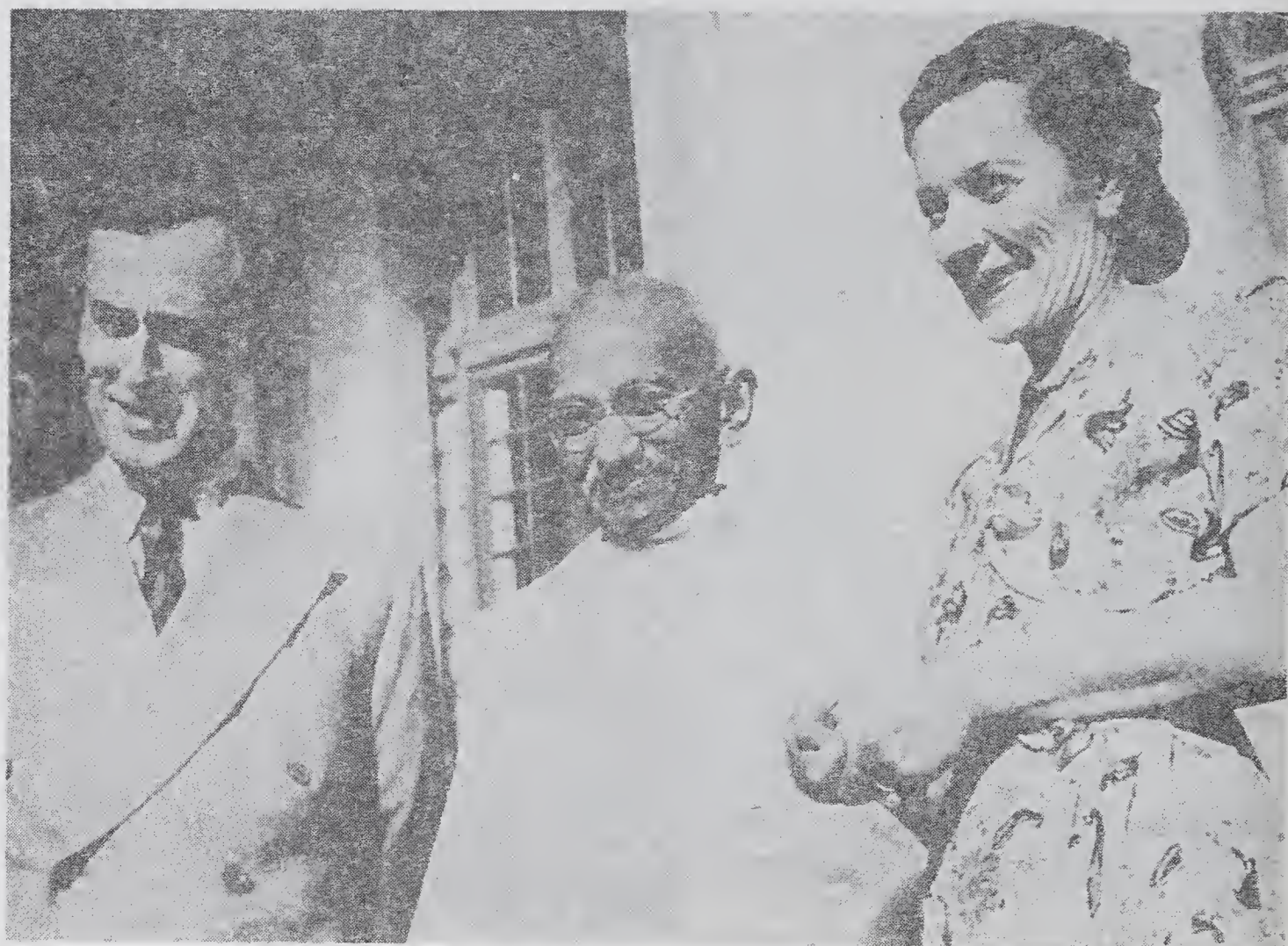


*Jawaharlal Nehru and Sarojini Naidu
at the Asian Relations Conference,
1947*



Gandhiji addressing the Asian Relations Conference, 1947





Gandhiji, Lord and Lady Mountbatten, New Delhi, 1947

Mountbatten discussing his partition plan with Congress and Muslim League leaders, 2 June 1947



LEADERS ACCEPT MOUNT BATTEN PROPOSALS?

"Quit India" Bill For Parliament

Legislation To Be Introduced This Session

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). The Associated Press of India reports that the Government of India is preparing to introduce a "Quit India" Bill in the Indian Parliament this session. The bill is expected to be introduced by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. B. R. Ambedkar, on June 10.

Congress Indicates 'Objectionable' Features' In New Plan

Loan Deal With U.S. Repudiated

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). The Congress Party has indicated that it has serious objections to the new plan for the development of India. The plan, which was announced by the Government of India, includes a loan of \$500 million from the United States. The Congress Party has stated that it is not prepared to accept the plan as it is, and that it will be necessary to negotiate a new plan.

Britain's Choice For Indian Princes

No Separate Agreements After Transfer Of Power

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). The Government of India has announced that it has decided to accept the proposals of the British Government regarding the transfer of power to India. The proposals include the appointment of a new Governor-General and the appointment of a new Prime Minister. The Government has also announced that it will not enter into separate agreements with the Indian Princes after the transfer of power.

India Statement In Commons

Mr. Ambedkar Speaks

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). Mr. B. R. Ambedkar, Minister of Home Affairs, has made a statement in the Indian Parliament regarding the "Quit India" Bill. He stated that the bill is a necessary measure for the development of India and that it will be introduced in the Indian Parliament this session.

JINNAH'S MIDNIGHT VISIT TO VICEROYAL LODGE

Mr. Jinnah's Visit To Viceroy's Lodge

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). Mr. Jinnah visited the Viceroy's Lodge in New Delhi on June 2. He was accompanied by Mr. K. M. Munshi, Minister of Education. Mr. Jinnah was seen in the garden of the lodge and was talking to the Viceroy.

League Council Summoned

Mr. Ambedkar To Attend

NEW DELHI, June 3 (A.P.). The League Council has been summoned for a meeting on June 10. Mr. B. R. Ambedkar is expected to attend the meeting. The League Council is a body which was set up by the Government of India to advise it on matters relating to the League of Nations.

STOP PRESS

Mr. Ambedkar's Statement

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TURN TO THE VILLAGES

Mr. Ambedkar's Statement

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EXPLOSION IN U.S. CHEMICAL FACTORY

Mr. Ambedkar's Statement

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Latest From Lahore

Mr. Ambedkar's Statement

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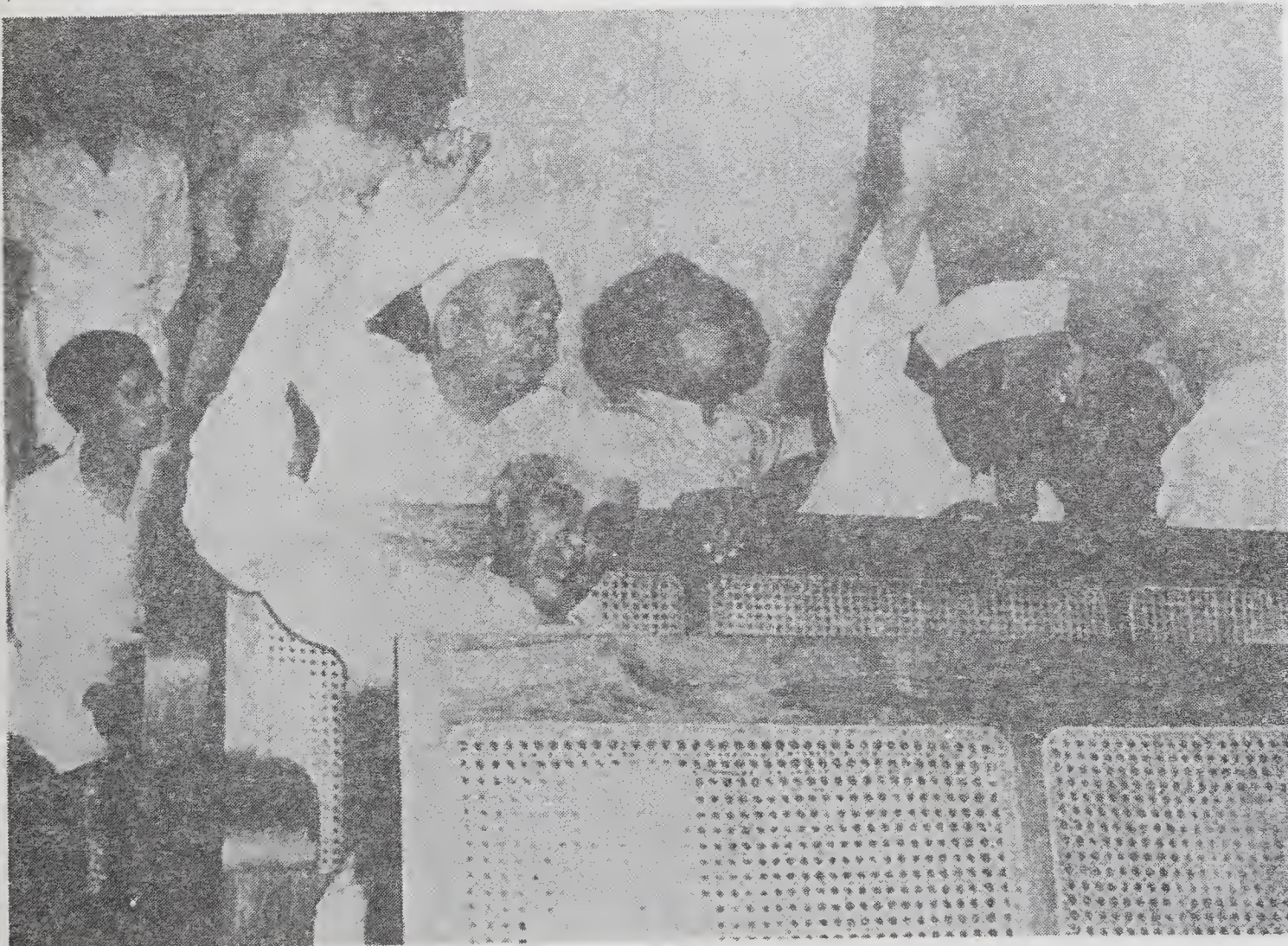
STOP PRESS

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Newspaper report from the Bombay Chronicle, 3 June 1947

Jawaharlal Nehru, Govind Vallabh Pant and Rajendra Prasad at the AICC meeting, 15 June 1947





A view of Congress leaders at the AICC meeting of India 15 June 1947

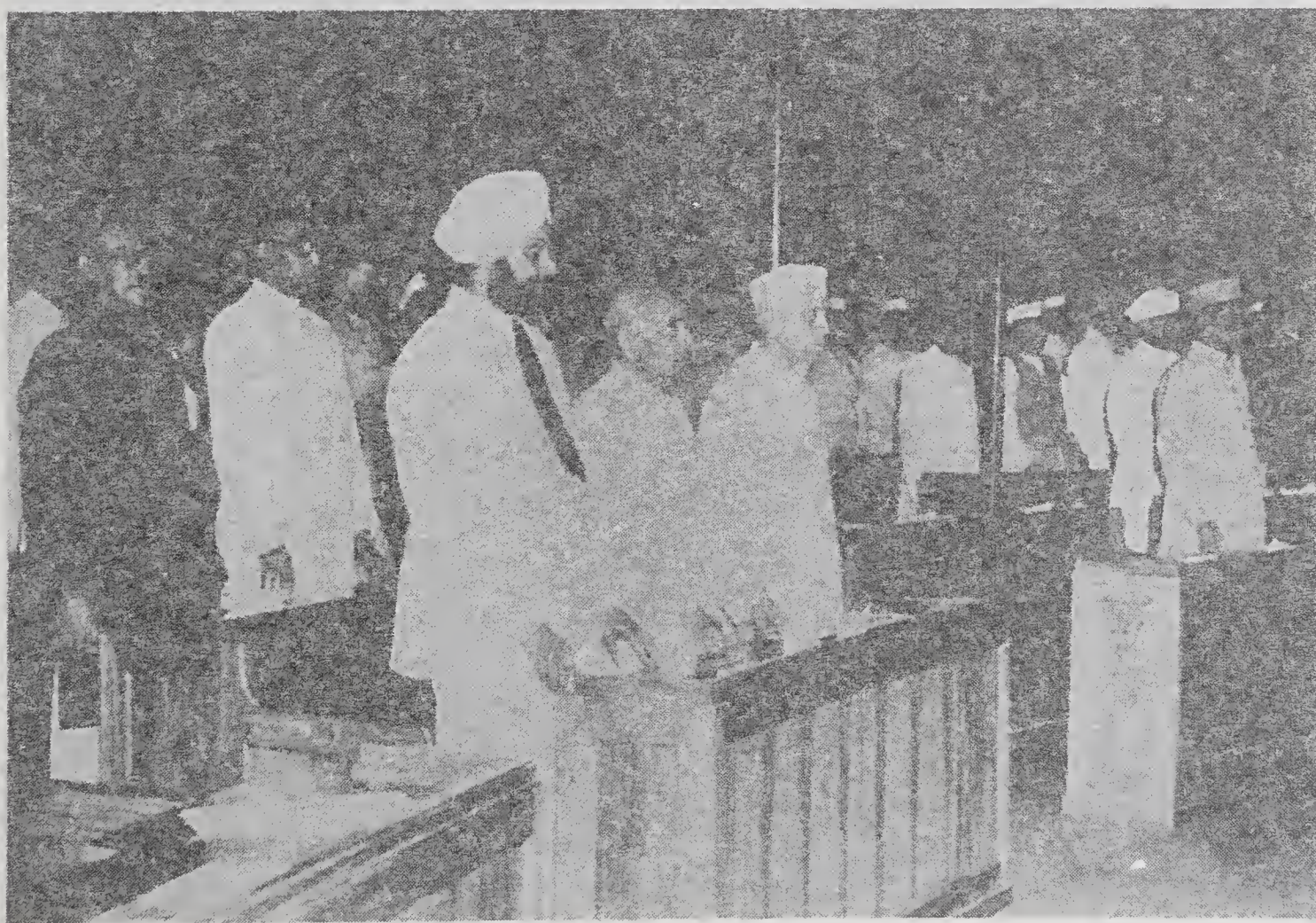
Gandhiji consoling victims of communal riots at Hardwar, 1947



*Jawaharlal Nehru presenting the
National Flag to the Constituent
Assembly, 22 July 1947*



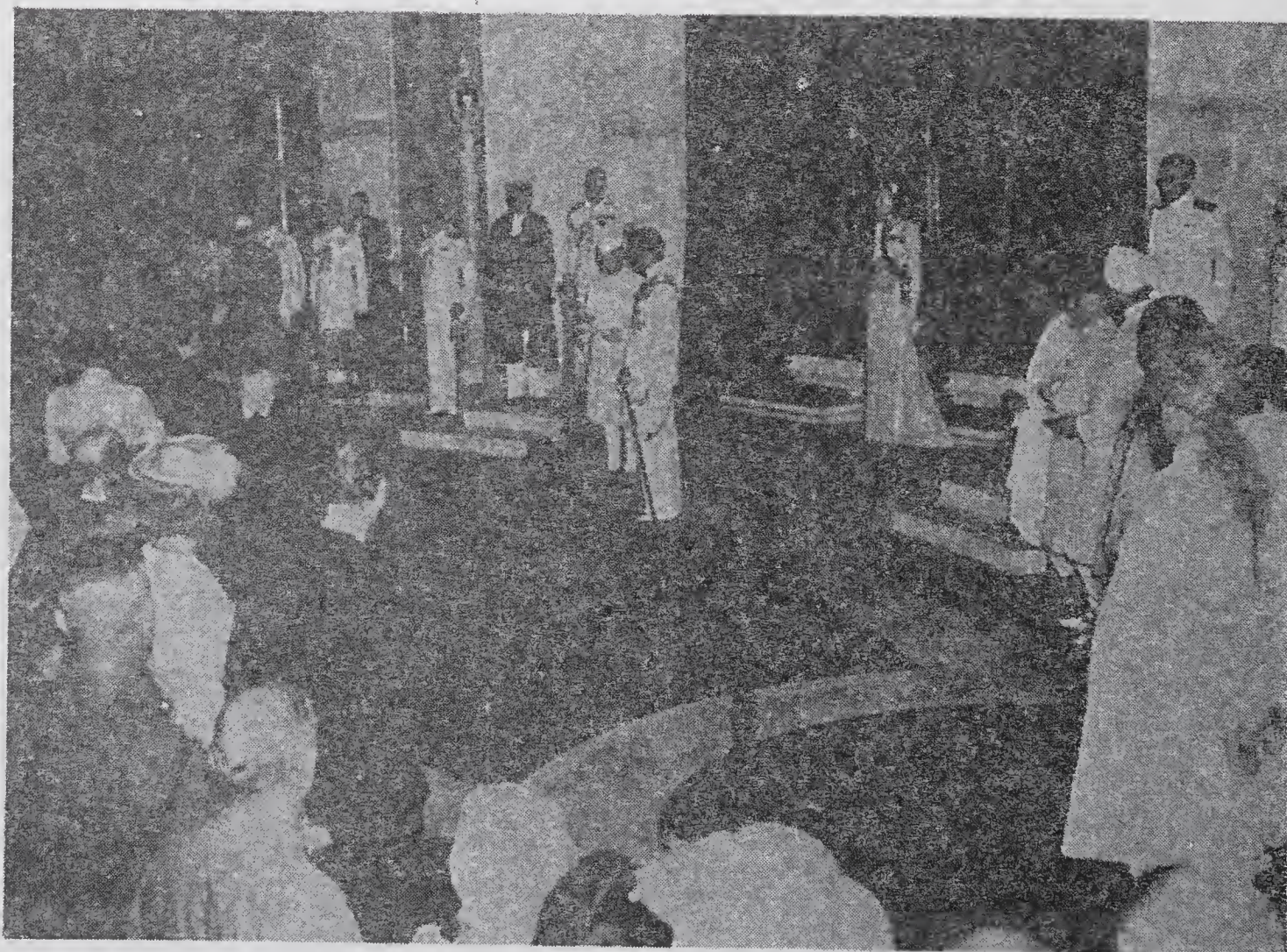
Members of the Constituent Assembly taking the pledge, midnight of 14-15 August 1947





Jawaharlal Nehru making 'Tryst with Destiny' speech in the Constituent Assembly, 14-15 August 1947

Jawaharlal Nehru taking oath of office as Prime Minister of Independent India, 15 August 1947



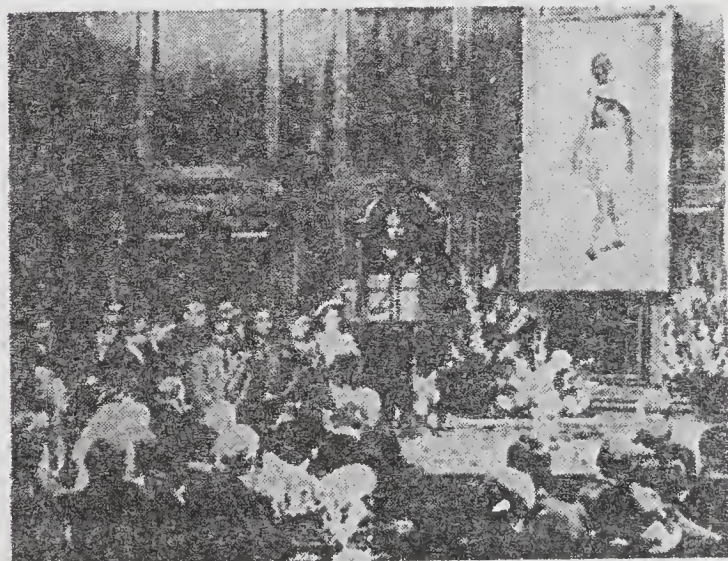


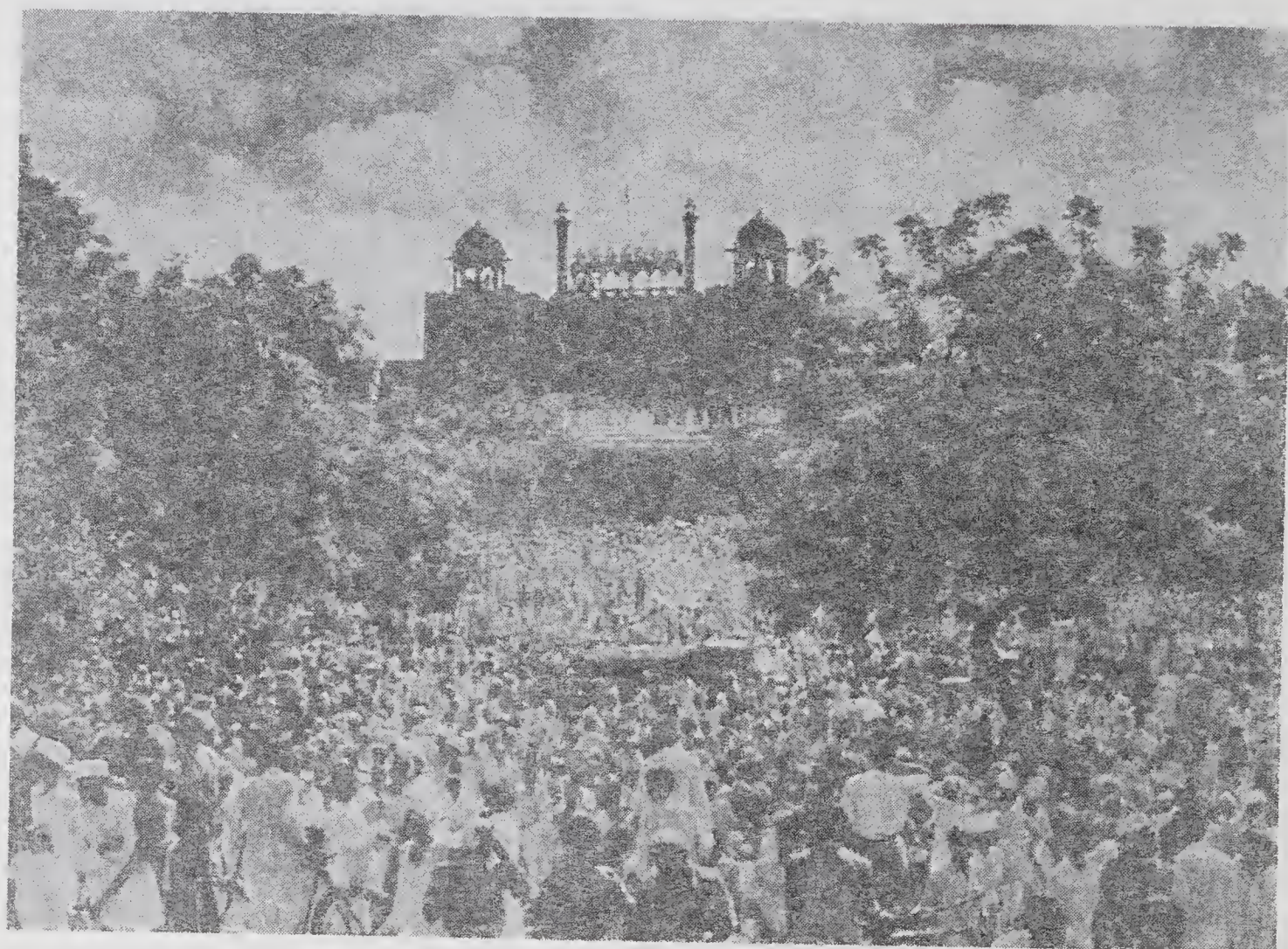
A view of Independence Day celebrations, 16 August 1947

*Independence Day celebrations in London
by Indians, August 1947*



*Independence Day celebrations at India
House, London, August 1947*





Independence Day celebrations at Red Fort, 16 August 1947

that Congress would cease to be a popular mass party if it could not command popularity in times of stress. The Civil Disobedience Movement of Congressmen which he had conducted in 1940-1 had been suspended, but he did not rule out civil disobedience in a purely symbolic manner on behalf of resisters of all war on the pure ground of non-violence, no matter how few the resisters were.

The All India Congress Committee met at Wardha on 15 January, after an interval of fifteen months, in a relaxed and cordial atmosphere. Nearly 190 members out of 384 attended the session; some 40 were still in jail. A large number of visitors were also present, and Mahatma Gandhi, who arrived a few minutes before the meeting commenced, received a great ovation. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President, reviewed, in a ninety-minute speech in urbane Hindustani, the Congress attitude towards the war. Along with others in the Congress and the vast majority of nationalists in the country, the president accepted the position that free India should defend freedom with the sword also, but presently India was engaged in her freedom struggle non-violently and the nation, in spite of sympathy for the democratic ideology maintained by the Allied powers against the Axis, could not honourably collaborate in the war effort of the Government of India. Mahatma Gandhi then addressed the AICC in pin-drop silence for an hour, speaking, as usual with him, first in Hindi and then in English. The Bardoli resolution had put the Congress right with the expectant world, and, he believed, the resolution reflected the Congress mind. The groups represented by Jawaharlal, Rajaji, and Rajendra Babu, could find themselves mirrored in the resolution. 'It is no longer open to the government and the Congress critics to say that the Congress has banged the door to negotiation on the impossible or unpolitical ground of non-violence.' There were some who said that there was no operative clause in the resolution. 'There need not be an operative clause because it is only an explanatory resolution.' There was no question of the Congress losing him. 'If you bring another resolution to retain my leadership [in Civil Disobedience] you will be doing a foolish thing.' 'I have asked the whole-hoggers of non-violence to remain neutral on the resolution but if I find that an attempt is made to divide the House then I will advise them not to remain neutral but to support the resolution.' Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu were not happy with the resolution, but Gandhiji asked them not to resign from the Working Committee. There was no question of losing him, or of Gandhi's indifference to the Indian National Congress. 'Those who built up the Congress like Dadabhai, Pherozeshah and Tilak are no more, but the Congress still functions. For they have left for us an edifice to work upon and expand. And if the passing away of these leaders has not made any difference, why should the withdrawal of other leaders make any?' Gandhiji was detached from

the Congress, but for him (as in cases of other karmayogi servants of humanity) detachment did not mean indifference. The assertion of 'no split' in the Congress organization made by Maulana Azad was reinforced by Mahatma Gandhi: 'We work as one family.'

While appealing for Congress unity and the adoption of the Bardoli Resolution, Gandhi, in his speech before the AICC on 15 January, did not hide his personal reaction to it. In his appreciation of the situation in the light of the Working Committee's deliberations at Bardoli in December, Gandhi said that his feeling was that Congress had gone a step back with this resolution because Congress wanted to go a step further on the road to independence. 'I know that Rajaji will not agree with me. He feels that I am totally wrong. Pandit Jawaharlal may say that we have not gone back. I have full and equal right to hold my opinion and I do feel that we have gone a step back.' The true swaraj of his dreams could not be gained by bartering away the twenty-year-old, tried political method of *ahimsa*, 'an invaluable pearl', he had in his possession; no other method could be equally good for the promotion of freedom and peace in this country and in the world. He himself would deplore nationalist India's participation in this or any other war. He, however, would not quarrel with Congressmen for whom non-violence was no creed but calculated political method. And he had always conceded as correct that non-violence was only one of many political methods and that: 'As a political method, it can always be changed, modified, altered, even given up in preference to another.' Referring to the reported differences between him and Jawaharlal, Gandhi said: 'I have said for some years and say now that not Rajaji but Jawaharlal will be my successor.' Jawaharlal could protest that he did not follow Gandhi's language in politics, but that was a small matter: 'when I am gone he will speak my language.' 'My quarrel is with Rajaji but he is my relative.' The Bardoli Resolution had accommodated the group pressing for return to the Parliamentary Programme; this group, represented by Rajaji, would welcome an honourable offer from the British Government. 'But you may be sure,' observed Gandhi, 'the Congress will not be easily satisfied. It will go on repeating "Not this", "Not this", until it wins the real commodity it wants.' What was his advice to T. Prakasam and others who wished to know about the prospects of resuming satyagraha under Gandhi's leadership? Gandhi replied that at the moment he did not know what to do about the idea of embarking upon a satyagraha on his own and with the support of those who were offering to join him. In his view, the Bardoli decisions indicated that 'so far as civil disobedience is concerned the Congress commands Gandhi to do what he likes and to conduct it in a manner which he likes. That is the position.' Gandhi added: 'In Bardoli I had the intention that the House [AICC] should be divided because if the House was predominantly [for] non-violence then

this resolution should be thrown out. But that was a hasty opinion of mine.' 'So long as I am alive and my mind is not paralysed it is better they leave civil disobedience to the expert. After all, they would not be able to civil disobedience as effectively as I can.'

After Mahatma Gandhi had spoken, Jawaharlal moved the resolution with a brief speech to emphasize two points in the Congress situation: that each individual member of the Working Committee could be considered as representing a certain viewpoint, and such differences were necessary for the progress of the Congress; and that it could not be expected of the Congress to give up the demand for independence, however much the British Government might frighten the Congress of Japanese or German aggression on their Indian empire. Rajaji formally seconded the resolution at the first day's session, reserving his right of speech to the last. In the second day's session (16 January), discordant notes were sounded, indicating that, without Gandhi's blessings bestowed on it on the previous day, the Bardoli resolution could have provoked stronger expressions of opposition from the groups which opposed India's participation in the War and Congress collaboration in the government's war effort, either on the ground of political policy, or on the ground of Gandhian pacifism and non-violence. The Congress could not ignore practical politics, nor could Congressmen of various groups reconcile themselves easily to positions which their avowed ideological loyalties did not favour or which did not add to their public influence. In explaining the position of the 'no-war' group, Rajendra Prasad said that it was necessary for Indians to hold firmly to the principle of non-violence, but it would be wrong for Congressmen to divide the Congress at this stage on the issue of non-violence. He declared: 'By merely passing resolution they were not called upon to take up arms today; that would happen only in unlikely contingency of British Government declaring in favour of India's independence and transferring responsibility of administration to people. They did not accordingly think it necessary to resign from Working Committee. They would make their choice when Government opened way for armed assistance by Congress.' T. Prakasam stoutly opposed the Bardoli resolution, maintaining that Gandhi's interpretation of the Bombay resolution was not incorrect, and that Congress could ill afford to repudiate Gandhi's leadership in the struggle. Prakasam held: 'Bardoli Resolution is worse than Poona offer as it keeps door open for settlement with Britain without making any demands.'

The Congress Socialists reiterated their position that, on political grounds alone, they were opposed to India's participation in the war effort. On their behalf, Farid Ansari moved an amendment urging the convening of a constituent assembly as national authority to watch the interests of the Indian people and assert India's right to play her part in

the world's progress. On behalf of the Communist Party, Radhabai Subbarayan moved an amendment emphasizing the need for India to align herself with the 'progressive' forces of the world. Three other amendments moved on behalf of the Communist Party suggested the same point that, in view of the changed character of the war (because of the Anglo-Russian alliance), the Congress should record their wholehearted support to the Allied nations at war with the Nazis and Fascists. The best speech was made by Rajaji who argued that the talk of parliamentary programme was not merely seeking power but a matter of expedience. India was alive to the dangers of aggression; she should be in a position to render assistance to victims of aggression; and her 400 million people were not powerless. If the British Government appreciated the Congress position and without delay made it possible for Congress 'to do necessary things', Congress could not shirk the responsibility of participating in the government. 'If Central Government is placed in my hands I would take it, but I would not touch Madras Government today without control of Centre. In present conditions there is no sense in coming to power in province. Parliamentary programme without power is out of the question.' Rajaji complained at this meeting that he had been unjustly suspected of mysterious movements and charged with being 'too clever' for the Working Committee with whom, people said, he always had his own way. 'On the one hand, you say I am too clever for you and on the other you think I am stupid enough to go and seek a settlement with the British Government and fear that I would go and accept anything they would offer.' He pleaded: 'How could I be too clever to you the cleverest men in the country, and at the same time stupid to those "incompetent" British? If I am a hunter please credit me of being a big game hunter — I won't be content with anything less.' Pandit Jiwanlal rose to declare amidst laughter, at this point, that members could not help suspecting Rajaji of being 'too clever', since, 'For one little mistake of not carefully studying the Bombay Resolution the greatest man amongst us [Mahatma Gandhi] had to go into the wilderness,'³ as a result of Rajaji's interpretation of it.

The Bardoli resolution was endorsed by the AICC (204 votes to 15) on 16 January. This meeting approved the decisions of the Working Committee made at Wardha, on 13 and 14 January, also. The prescribed text of the Independence Day Pledge in 1942 dropped the paragraph relating to the Civil Disobedience Movement which Gandhiji had found it necessary to insert in January 1941, in view of the Individual Satyagraha he was then conducting. There would be no annual session of the AICC in 1942, which meant that there would be no Congress elections.⁴ Further, most urgent instructions were issued to the provincial Congress committees to invigorate in towns and villages the Congress programme of constructive work, ensuring daily contact between Congressmen and

the common people in course of organized social service. In view of the War advancing towards India's eastern coastline and provinces and the air raid and other precautions being taken by the government, the Working Committee had special instruction for Congressmen everywhere. They were expected to carry out such instructions as were issued to the public by the government authorities for the preservation of life and the maintenance of public order, provided such orders were not contrary to Congress instructions. Congressmen would take interest in the air raid precautions, avoid conflict with magistrates and the police, and work for maintaining the morale of the people in areas where there were scares of bombing and invasion. Rajendra Prasad was instructed by the Working Committee to chalk out further steps for public work in emergencies: 'Self-sufficiency' in villages in foodgrain and handloom cloth production and other necessities, organization of Congress volunteers to promote a sense of security against lawlessness in case of weakening of local authorities and to provide relief work.

In justifying the Working Committee's fresh emphasis on the Constructive Programme, Jawaharlal had observed in his speech at the AICC session on 15 January: 'Who knows what will happen in the next six months? In the face of these uncertain conditions our real work lies in the country — the organizing of every province, town, village and ward for every eventuality, raising volunteers to preserve order and protect the people.'⁵

Government officials naturally suspected, in the winter and spring of 1942, that the Congress organization was trying to prepare the ground and climate for a 'parallel government' in the country. The Governor of Bombay, in a report covering the first half of January 1942, wrote to the Governor-General: 'The Congress resolve to organise the countryside in the interests of law and order and the maintenance of morale will want watching. Its object is, I have little doubt, to re-establish Congress hold and prestige, and to take advantage of any weakening of authority which may result from war developments.' On this, the governor-general put a comment in the margin of the report: 'We must stamp on any attempt to set up a parallel organisation.'⁶

After the Wardha session of the AICC, the question of succession to Gandhi as leader of the national struggle was taken by many as settled finally, by Gandhi's prophecy or nomination, in the course of his address on 15 January in favour of Jawaharlal. The Governor of the United Provinces did not welcome it: 'One very significant point is that Gandhi appears to have definitely nominated Jawaharlal Nehru as his successor; in other words he has rather discarded the more reasonable persons in Congress, such as Rajagopalachari, but of course this does not mean that there will be split in Congress which will obviously never

occur so long as the Mahatma is alive.' The governor said that, before Bardoli, 'there were indications in Rajagopalachari's speeches that he might part company with the Mahatma but once again history has repeated itself and Gandhi with his usual cunning has welded Congress together with a formula which is capable of numerous interpretations.' The governor regarded Nehru as a shifty politician who was not prepared to make any settlement with the British Government, and that there were some signs of agrarian trouble brewing in the districts of the United Provinces, because of undesirable activities by Congress workers.

District Magistrate of Gorakhpur who it may be remembered was the officer who sentenced Nehru and whose views may be possibly somewhat extreme, says that the release of prisoners has resulted in a serious increase in agrarian agitation particularly among the sugar-cane growers, that the agitators were telling the growers to ask for a very high price for cane and at the same time were carrying on their subversive propaganda on the lines that the British should be turned out of India 'naked and hungry' or that there is no difference between German and British rule.⁷

The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, wrote to the Secretary of State, L.S. Amery, in the last week of January 1942; 'The Congress Working Committee, with the possible exception of Nehru, who is in a very special position, appears more and more clearly as a collection of declining valetudinarians who have no grip on the country, but, who, politically, are purely parasitic on Gandhi, the spell-binder. Why, therefore, should anyone expect his colleagues to dismiss the Mahatma.'⁸ A few days earlier, on 21 January, in a more serious mood, the viceroy wrote to Amery:

In my experience they [the Congress] are entirely ruthless politicians; will take all they can get; will do their utmost to manoeuvre us into a position in which we make sacrifices that are substantial and that will increase the prestige and the power of Congress in this country. But short of acceptance of their full demand no sacrifices however great can be relied on to keep them quiet.

He proceeded to say: 'I need not develop the unfortunate effect on those who genuinely sympathise with us in this country, or on those to whom we have given undertakings, such as the Muslim League, or on the Princes, of allowing ourselves to be stampeded into negotiations with Congress or acceptance of Congress demand.' The viceroy was opposed to any real transfer of power to Indians, at this stage. 'I do not believe that any further move at this stage will be likely to improve India's contribution to the war.' He felt that further transfer of power to Indians would give encouragement to 'quisling activities'. 'Recent report from

military authorities in eastern India is to effect that there is a large and dangerous potential 5th column in Bengal, Assam, Bihar, and Orissa, and that indeed potential of pro-enemy sympathy and activity in eastern India is enormous.⁹

In the viceroy's appreciation of the political situation in India, it was futile to do something 'to touch the heart of India' in expectation of holding India by silken chords of ties with the master race, the British. He wrote to Amery on 21 January 1942 that India had no umbilical chord connecting her with Great Britain, 'no natural association with the Empire'. Britain had her own reasons for holding India; reasons of imperial security were such that any constitutional move going further than the August Declaration of 1940 in promises and concessions would jeopardize efficiency in the British war effort in India, without conciliating the Congress. The British Government was, in fact, in no position to provide rifles and war equipment to any larger body of recruits of mercenaries being raised in this country. The existing Viceroy's Council of nominated members of Britons and Indians was the nearest approach to a serviceable 'national government' he could think of under war conditions. Who could say that once associated with Indian defence, the Congress would not interfere seriously with the current war plans of the British Government? It was not unthinkable that occasions might arise when Congress representatives could cry for calling back to India of Indian troops employed in North Africa and West Asia or in other distant theatres of war. For the paramount reason of British victory in this war, India should be held and could be held as firmly as the Government of India were doing. 'I suspect that the moment they [Indians] think that we may lose the war or take a bad knock, their leaders would be much more concerned to make terms with the victor at our expense than to fight for the ideals to which so much lip service is given, and I have been impressed by the prominence given by Rajagopalachariar to the doubts felt in the AICC as to the wisdom of antagonising possible victors.' In regard to demands of transfer of real power in India to Indians to govern and defend India, the viceroy would maintain the current British policy of no concessions, though he was aware that the Cabinet in England had to deal, after the outbreak of the Pacific War, 'with much Left Wing pressure and pressure from academic theorists or sentimentalists, reflected even in papers so important as the *Times*'. Linlithgow repeated what he had been telling the Secretary of State since 1940, that he could be depended on in the battle of nerves on the Indian question. 'This battle if it is lost, will, however, be lost at home and not in India, and if my suggestion that we make no move is accepted by yourself and by the Cabinet it will be necessary to consider the best line to take to try to damp down activities of this order [by critics of Indian policy],' wrote Linlithgow.¹⁰

In appreciating criticisms of Indian policy the Secretary of State had to face in the British press and Parliament, Amery wrote to Linlithgow on 20 January:

So far as the House is concerned, I dare say (besides Churchill) I may also find myself the target of criticism, not only on the constitutional issue, which I dare say I can weather all right in spite of the Press-fed clamour, but also for not having done far more to find both troops and munitions in India. Well, you know well enough what you have done with the resources at your disposal, and that you could only have done more if at this end more machine tools, more skilled staff, &c., had been immediately forthcoming. The most absurd type of criticism, of course, is that which suggests that if only we gave Congress, or even Sapru and Co. what they ask for, there would be millions of new recruits, rifles, tanks and aeroplane springing up from nowhere all over India.¹¹

On 22 January, Amery wrote to Churchill that there was nothing to be done at that moment with Sapru's proposals (2 January 1942) or with any suggestions of a fresh constitutional advance in India. 'Congress is not concerned in the least with co-operation, but only with getting us to do something which will prejudice the future in a sense contrary to our declaration of August 1940, with its explicit pledges to the Muslims, Princes and other minorities.' In a memorandum by the Secretary of State, dated 1 February, the Declaration of 1940 and the advance towards the Indianization of the Viceroy's Council already made were defended by Amery as generous and important steps in statesmanship in India.¹²

The appreciations made by Linlithgow and Amery of the Indian political situation roused the ire of Clement Attlee who represented the left wing in the Cabinet headed by Churchill, the leader of the Conservative majority in Parliament. On 24 January, Attlee wrote to Amery: 'There is a lot of opinion here which we cannot ignore which is not satisfied that there is nothing to be done, but to sit tight on the declaration of August 1940. This opinion exists in your party as well as mine.' Attlee urged: 'It is worth considering whether someone should not be charged with a mission to try to bring the [Indian] political leaders together.'¹³ In a historic memorandum dated 2 February 1942, Attlee wrote: 'We need a man to do in India what [Lord] Durham did in Canada.' The viceroy, Attlee felt, was obviously thinking in terms of making minor concessions to the Indian parties; he talked of regaining lost ground after the War:

The Viceroy, in paragraph 14 of his telegram, points out that 'India and Burma have no natural association with the Empire, from which they are

alien by race, history and religion, and for which neither of them has any natural affection, and both are in the Empire, because they are conquered countries which have been brought there by force, kept there by our control, and which hitherto it has suited to remain under our protection.' This is an astonishing statement to be made by a Viceroy. It sounds more like an extract from an anti-imperialist propaganda speech. If it were true it would form the greatest possible condemnation of our rule in India and would amply justify the action of every extremist in India. But it is not the whole truth. All India was not the fruits of conquest; large parts of it came under our rule to escape from tyranny and anarchy. The history of at least 150 years has forged close links between India and the United Kingdom.

'It is one of the great achievements of our rule in India', Attlee pointed out in this memorandum, 'that, even if they do not entirely carry them out, educated Indians do accept British principles of justice and liberty. We are condemned by Indians not by the measure of Indian ethical conceptions but by our own, which we have taught them to accept.' Attlee observed: 'It is precisely this acceptance by politically conscious Indians of the principles of democracy and liberty which puts us in the position of being able to appeal to them to take part with us in the common struggle; but the success of this appeal and India's response does put upon us the obligation of seeing that we, as far as we may, make them sharers in the things for which we and they are fighting.' Attlee had no praise for the Viceroy in India: 'I find it quite impossible to accept and act on the crude imperialism of the Viceroy, not only because I think it is wrong, but because I think it is fatally short-sighted and suicidal. I should certainly not be prepared to cover up this ugliness with a cloak of pious sentiment about liberty and democracy.' To mark time was to lose India; to save India for the cause of the common struggle against the enemies of democracy and liberty, it was time for an act of statesmanship on the part of Britain. 'The Secretary of State thinks that we may weather the immediate storm by doing nothing; but what of subsequent storms? Such a hand-to-mouth policy is not statesmanship.'¹⁴

This memorandum of 2 February 1942 by Attlee is significant in three respects: first, it indicated that the Lord Privy Seal strongly disagreed with the policy of do-nothing which was proposed by the viceroy in 1940 and heartily endorsed by the Prime Minister and supported by the Secretary of State with pleasure and debating skill. Second, the Attlee Memorandum obliged the Cabinet to take an initiative in Indian policy leading to the Cripps Mission (22 March-11 April 1942); and third, it proved the truth of Mahatma Gandhi's dictum that one must not lose faith in the sense of justice of the British people among whom not a few sympathized with the cause of political freedom for India.

2. War at India's Borders; the Congress Response

It was part of Gandhi's greatness in national politics that, ever since his entry into it in a big way after the First World War, he did his best, up to his last breath, to educate his countrymen in the civilizing idea that there was a valid distinction between a people and a government, and that, in public life, as in personal relations, it was vulgar, also unwise, to be hateful, bad-mannered and violent. He did not forget his 'Andrews connection' at any stage in 1942, even though from early in the year he began to show signs that the impact of the disorderly and rather quick withdrawal of British power from Malaya and Burma 'after necessary demolitions' was no less on his mind than on the Congress mind generally. Much of the political climate in India in 1942, consequently much of the history of that year, can hardly be appreciated well at this distance of time without recognizing the importance of the entirely new factor in the situation: the approach of a World War to the very gates of India on the Burma border and to the entire east coast, from Calcutta to Madras, which obliged the British Government to give priority to military needs over the popular needs of their subjects. The Central Intelligence Officer at Madras recorded in his report dated 4 January 1942:

The grave news from Malaya and the Far East has entirely eclipsed the reports of Allied successes in Russia and Libya and public confidence in the might of Great Britain and the U.S.A. has, I think, deteriorated considerably. The local Congress press has seized the opportunity of expressing the view that the only chance of sustaining this country's morale is the immediate establishment of popular Governments with full powers. There has been much loose talk regarding war developments and many wild rumours have been current. One of the most recent of these is that some Indian Regiments in Malaya have mutinied and gone over to the enemy after shooting their British Officers. A considerable number of people, mostly Indian women and children have left Madras during the fortnight and, in many families, arrangements have been made to vacate the City should the present situation deteriorate. Fear of looting and misbehaviour of troops likely to be stationed here and not the fear of being bombed seems mainly responsible for the exodus. Matters have not been helped by a sub-leader in *The Hindu* of 31 December which referred to various acts of misconduct on the part of the troops in the past and demands that the military authorities should take adequate precautions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

In spite of the general nervousness which prevailed, people were quietly going about their normal avocations; they demanded that government control prices and set up cheap grain shops; merchants complained that government put pressure on them to co-operate in price control but did not provide transport facilities at reasonable rates to leave them a margin

of profit.¹⁵ The Madras Governor wrote to the Governor General: 'There is a panicky atmosphere about, fear of looting, bombing, anxiety about relatives in Malaya and Burma, lack of news, and general "wind up".' The governor emphasized the importance of truthfulness and less reticence in news: 'Why should we announce that there were 600 casualties in the first raid [on Rangoon] when we know that there were at least 1,700? I do not agree at all with Dorman-Smith [Governor of Burma] that it is not better to tell the truth. Refugees are arriving from Rangoon, who are telling their friends what *did* happen and there is a very general feeling of disbelief in the official statements and figures.' Of about 700,000 Indians in Malaya, the great majority were people from the Madras Presidency. 'The fact that Europeans were evacuated from Penang whilst Indians were not, has done a great deal of harm, although no doubt the far larger number of Indians in Penang presented obvious transport difficulties. None the less, there is pretty bitter feeling about it.'¹⁶

The British withdrawal from northern Malaya towards Singapore, the exodus from Calcutta, and the bombing of Rangoon, led to no noticeable exodus from Bombay City in January 1942, but there was an undercurrent of nervousness, a marked rise in prices, a tendency to buy gold and silver, reported the Bombay Governor in a letter of 1 January 1942 to the Governor General.¹⁷ In early February, he reported that though public feeling was fairly steady, there was in the background 'the political resentment which Congress inspires amongst the educated classes, and the danger that, when this resentment is played upon by real fear, there will be a swing towards making peace with the enemy.'¹⁸ For a few weeks following the evacuation of Rangoon (9 March), there was a small exodus from Bombay City. The Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay sent on 23 March a telegram to the viceroy conveying their heartfelt request to be assured that the scorched earth policy, reported to be followed in Malaya and Burma, was no part of British plans of withdrawal in Indian theatres in case of Japanese landings or invasion. There being no popular national government in charge of Indian defence, there was an unfortunate dualism in the interests of the country and the government, said the Indian Merchants Chamber, in requesting 'that there may not be anything done to alienate the sympathies of the people at large when the war is at the very gates of India thus destroying any possibility of concerted Front with regard to Defence of the country.'¹⁹

In Calcutta, the biggest Indian city, a state of emergency was declared by a government notification on 24 December 1941. From early 1942, the military presence of the British power was increasingly felt in Calcutta, Dacca, Chittagong and other parts of the province. An exodus of women and children from Calcutta began even before the fall of Rangoon. Government orders for the closure of schools in Calcutta, essential

supplies control, orders for requisitioning buildings, houses and boats according to 'the denial policy' in preparation for apprehended Japanese landings in coastal areas, high prices of foodgrains, shortage of *atta* and coal in industrial areas, added to the existing volume of anti-British feeling in Bengal. Nationalist newspapers in Bengal and in other provinces carried in April strong comments on the discriminatory treatment extended to Indians in the arrangements made for evacuees trekking through the jungle-covered hilly areas dividing Burma from India. The British Government had made a Burma-China road, but no Burma-India road. Till the second week of March, Indians were denied the use of the Monywa-Sitaung-Tamu-Palel route into Manipur from Burma which was reserved for whites, Anglo-Burmans, Anglo-Indians, and others with special recommendations; Indians were obliged to take the more difficult and longer Kalewa-Tamu-Mintha-Hiroika route, in which the government provided few relief facilities and little protection from animals and robbers.²⁰

Many stories of hardship, disease, destitution and death on the road of poor and aged evacuees, accounts of bombing of Rangoon and Mandalay, the panicky departure of government servants from their posts to points of safety, the sudden collapse of law and order, were heard from evacuees from Burma. A news item sent by Reuter on 2 March from London, published in Indian newspapers on 4 March, said that it was feared that Japan would make an all-out drive against India also. Indian newspapers carried, on 10 March, the news of the fall of Rangoon, in Indian eyes the biggest event of the War in the East after the fall of Singapore. There was a big naval battle in the Indian Ocean on 4 April, and a big air raid by the Japanese over Colombo on the following day, in which 27 Japanese planes were shot down and 30 damaged by the defenders. On 7 April, newspapers said that there was an enemy naval force, including an aircraft carrier, operating in the Bay of Bengal, and that the enemy attacked merchant ships and bombed Vizagapatam and Coconada port areas. Thereafter, the Japanese fleet disappeared mysteriously from the Indian Ocean, but the Japanese army in Burma occupied Yenangyang by 19 April, and Lashio by 2 May. In the first week of May, the Japanese army claimed the fall of Mandalay, which practically meant the fall of British Burma. On 8 and 9 May, the Japanese bombed Chittagong in Bengal, sending tremors of an invasion scare to Calcutta and beyond. On 26 May, General Alexander, commander of the British forces retreating from Burma, declared: 'We have held off the invasion of India.'²¹ About this time, the Government of Burma was housed in Simla.

British prestige in India had been declining steadily after the victories of Nazi Germany and the fall of France in June 1940. In the spring of 1942, the invasion scare in India was an obvious indication of Japan's

prestige as a military power reaching its peak in India, and of popular faith in the might and efficiency of the British Government dropping to its nadir, during the Second World War. In the second week of April 1942, the Bengal Governor wrote to the Governor General:

British prestige — still the important factor in the stability of government — has obviously been weakened by the loss of Honkong, Singapore, Rangoon and much of Burma. These losses have followed upon publications which gave rise to confidence in our preparedness, and have inevitably resulted in a genuine feeling of insecurity. That feeling has been voiced in Gandhi's criticism that Britain's post-war constitutional proposals for India amount to a post-dated cheque on a bank of doubtful solvency. The fact must be faced that this feeling exists, and will become intensified with the continuance of Japanese successes. As the belief grows of our inability to hold the enemy and consequently to hold India, the threat to internal security, and the danger of communal strife, and even of uprisings, is accentuated.²²

In the north-eastern province of Assam, where fear of Japanese invasion and bombing of towns was acute and where the Congress Party, though strongest in numbers and quality of members, would not form a provincial ministry because of the party's policy, the governor did not find it easy to infuse blood into 'the National War Front', a baby of the Government of India's Home Department, produced some months earlier. 'The discovery of suitable persons either to be the Provincial Leader or to be the Provincial Organiser is exceedingly difficult and I am afraid there may be delay in finding them. It is no use having somebody who is not really fitted for the task and such are extremely rare,' said the Assam Governor in a report to New Delhi on 4 March 1942.²³

In Orissa, another province where the invasion scare was marked, a maharaja aided by a pandit and a maulvi constituted a three-man ministry supported by Congress seceders and a number of independents who were a fluid element in the assembly. The Orissa Special Branch of the police reported at the end of March that Biswanath Das, MLA (ex-Premier) was said to have written to Vallabhbhai Patel at New Delhi that if and when a settlement regarding assumption of office by Congressmen was made with the government, it should be so arranged that four government-nominated members representing the hill tribes of Orissa find no place in the Orissa Legislature in which Congress had thirty members including the Speaker and the ministry had twenty-nine, one seat out of the total of sixty being vacant at the time. Biswanath Das was reported to have written in this letter that the war was at the door of Orissa and danger from Japan was much apprehended, since the province had an unprotected coastline suitable for landings. There was a big Proof Station (artillery) at Balasore, and the province was not far from

Calcutta and Kharagpur (a vital railway junction in Bengal) and from Tatanagar (the biggest iron and steel producing and major defence equipment manufacturing town in the country).²⁴

The Bihar Special Branch reported from Patna in early January 1942 that among the anti-British parties in that province the Kisan Sabha leaders were showing signs of a change in attitude though a change of heart remained doubtful.

Leaders of the Sahajanand group in the Kisan Sabha are coming round to the view that as Russia and China are now in the war, full support should be given to the war effort, and the anti-war policy enunciated at the last session of the All-India Kisan Sabha revised. The Swami himself is strongly in favour of this view, and is reported to be annoyed with members of the group such as Sheelabhadra Yajee and Mathura Prasad Singh, who continue to denounce the war as imperialist.

Several notable landowners of Bihar were members of the government-guided National War Front in this Congress-dominated province; as the year advanced, they showed signs of discomfort in their positions as the government's propaganda aides, or agents for combating Congress influence in the province.²⁵

In the United Provinces, in fact in India as a whole, Jawaharlal lent his great influence to strengthening the Congress *sangathan* (organization) in preparation for any role Congressmen might be called upon to play as leaders of the people, in a period of rapid changes in the international scene and stresses and scare in the country since December 1941. In an address to students at Allahabad on 15 December 1941, Jawaharlal asserted again his opposition (so marked in his speeches in 1939-40) to dominion status in regard to India.

I cannot understand the mentality of those who plead that India should have Dominion Status after the war; it might be two or five years. The term Dominion Status applies only to those who regard England as their mother country. Though India has been under British rule for the last 150 years or more she is not an offshoot or outgrowth of England. On the other hand, India is a mother country, Indian culture, Indian philosophy, Indian art have spread in Asia and elsewhere.

It mattered little, said Jawaharlal, whether Mr Churchill talked of Atlantic Charter or Indian Ocean Charter, 'On this question of independence of India there can be no compromise either with the British Government or with any group in India.'²⁶ Next day, in reply to a cable from V.K. Krishna Menon, Jawaharlal's contact man in London, who had desired

Congress participation in war effort without insisting on legal, constitutional changes in India, Jawaharlal sent a cable saying that the idea of Menon's interviewing British officials was undesirable, and that there was extreme bitterness in India against British policy.²⁷ The instructions issued by the Working Committee at Bardoli on 30 December 1941, which were drafted by Jawaharlal, said in the concluding paragraph (not published in the newspapers) what the attitude of Congressmen should be towards invaders: 'The Committee do not contemplate any invasion of India in the near future, but in the event of any such attempt, Congressmen can on no account submit to it or co-operate with it even if the consequences of such non-cooperation be death.'²⁸ On 2 January 1942, in a speech at Dana Bunder in Bombay, Jawaharlal emphasized the need for Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, even after the Working Committee had decided at Bardoli to accept his resignation from the position of supreme commander of the Congress satyagrahis which he had assumed in 1940. 'Mahatmaji is a tremendous force, a power, in our country. Even if we do not agree with him in any matter, how can we give up this great power? It is absurd,' India could not become timid because of non-violence; in the eyes of those who had been following the wise policy of non-violence in its true spirit, nothing was worse than cowardice. 'Mahatmaji once said, that people should fight for their rights through non-violence, but if they failed and lost strength, they should do so with the sword.' During war time, the *sagathan* must resist the invading enemy also.²⁹

In every other important speech since his release from jail in early December, Jawaharlal impressed upon students that they should be prepared to play their part well in the national struggle and in national reconstruction, and that they should organize volunteer and other organizations, for patriots could not be idle spectators of the loot and disorder which might take place in times of uncertainty. At Wardha, on 18 January 1942, he said that politics was like a war and that students could not keep themselves away from India's fight to be free. 'A flowing stream carries water which has life-giving properties. If a portion of the stream separates itself from the mainstream it loses its identity.' Struggle against the British had taught nationalists that they could not bow to any foreign power.³⁰ In a public speech at DAV High School, Gorakhpur, on 31 January, Jawaharlal declared: 'I wish that the District Magistrate notes it down that it is my duty and creed to revolt against the British rule.'³¹ The United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee issued at Allaha-bad on 5 February, 'Instructions to Congressmen' (drafted by Jawaharlal) regarding the nature of work and type of organization needed for maintenance of the public peace, relief of economic distress, and service in emergency, recommended by the Working Committee and the AICC meeting at Wardha in January.

Maintenance of the public peace irrespective of army measures that the Government may adopt for the purpose — the Congress must shoulder the responsibility for maintaining the public peace and of doing its utmost in this behalf both in urban and rural areas. A chain of men or women, in charge of this work in their respective areas, and responsible to the Congress organization, but not necessarily Congressmen, should be built up from the village and the part of a *mohalla* right up to the district.'

Congress committees in districts and cities were asked to complete as rapidly as possible the work of organization for self-help and self-reliance. Fortnightly reports were to be submitted by all persons in charge of any area for any particular work from among these: training in first aid, nursing, fire-fighting; contact with the people, and propaganda, especially against profiteering and hoarding; volunteer service and protection against unsocial elements; the promotion of communal unity; organizing special centres of spinning; and training women for service when possible.³²

In his inaugural speech at the 19th session of the All India Trade Union Congress at Kanpur on 8 February, Jawaharlal declared:

People argue that I have been inconsistent and have changed my attitude by not giving help to China and Russia. This appears to be an absurd allegation because Russia and China are not fighting for the freedom of others. They are fighting for their own freedom, honour and safety. So long as India does not attain freedom, to help Russia in this war is to strengthen the chain of our own slavery.

Jawaharlal deplored the split in the AITUC, and because of the controversy about the Congress attitude towards the war a group of workers (led by Royists and Communists who had set up 'an anti-fascist front' friendly to the British Government) were engaged in anti-Congress propaganda.³³ In this speech and in others delivered in the spring of 1942, Jawaharlal urged students, industrial workers, and kisans, not be carried away by the slogan of 'people's war'.³⁴ This slogan was adopted by the Politbureau of the Communist Party of India on 15 December 1941, in view of Nazi Germany's attack on Russia in June 1941 and the Anglo-Russian treaty of Mutual Aid of July 1941, and of suggestions, from Russian and British Communist Party sources, that the character of the Second World War had to be interpreted differently from the old cry of anti-imperialism and unity in the freedom struggle against the British in India.

The Government of India's intelligence reports from the early months of 1942 indicate that the Communists, who had preferred to remain under the Indian National Congress umbrella in spite of their quarrels with the Socialists and disagreement with the official Congress policy in

recent years, were moving away from the official Congress stand more markedly and coming closer in secret to the anti-Congress activities of the Government of India in the Home Department, which, however, found no reason to trust the Communists more readily than the Royists, who had left the Congress in 1940 and had practically become pro-Government propaganda agents against the Congress and the Forward Bloc. The Royist and Communist groups in 1942 would first concentrate on the defeat of Fascism and leave the matter of India's struggle for freedom from British rule to a later stage. Like the kisan leaders, the Communists were anxious in early 1942 to get out of jail and to get the repressive restrictions imposed by the police on them removed. As they had no Gandhian conceptions in their theories of ends and means, it was not easy for the Communists to persuade the authorities that Communist detainees also should benefit from the policy the Government had adopted shortly before Pearl Harbour of releasing Congress satyagrahis.³⁵ The All India Kisan Sabha had been openly split into two groups from early 1942. On 13 February, at Nagpur, the All India Kisan Sabha dominated by the Communist group passed a resolution calling for 'a relentless war for the final extermination of fascism', and urging upon the kisans to align themselves on the side of the Allied powers. Members from the United Provinces opposed this resolution, because it was contrary to the Congress policy of non-cooperation with the government's war effort.³⁶

From 9 to 22 February, General Chiang Kai-shek accompanied by Madame Chiang Kai-shek, visited India. Their main political object in this visit was to impress upon Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal the importance of co-operating with the Allies against Japan.³⁷ Jawaharlal had a ninety-minute discussion with Chiang Kai-shek at New Delhi on 10 February, and on the following day, in a speech at Gandhi Grounds in Delhi, he observed: 'Some people are speculating that there might be a change in the policy of the Congress towards the War because of the visit of the Generalissimo. There is no truth in these rumours.' He exhorted Congressmen to be ready to face any situation without caring for the odds against the nationalists. 'We want neither the Japanese nor the Germans to come, nor the British to stay.'³⁸ On 15 February, at New Delhi, Jawaharlal told the press that due to certain difficulties the Chinese leader could not go to Sevagram and Gandhiji could not come to New Delhi. 'It is entirely untrue that Mahatma Gandhi refused to see Chiang.' Congress policy with regard to China was the same as before: 'The Congress reply to the Chinese appeal is, 'we shall very gladly help you but our hands are tied.'

Was Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence a passive response to the call for defence against aggression, in this war? Jawaharlal was, as ever, the ablest spokesman of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress in

matters of subtle emphasis in public policy and of subtler distinctions between the positions adopted by Gandhi as an individual force in Indian politics and by the Congress as all-India political body. He said:

The distinction between the European conception of pacifism and Mahatma Gandhi's idea is, that while the former is a negative, passive thing, Mahatma Gandhi's conception is an active, dynamic thing. Under no circumstances are we going to submit or surrender to any foreign aggression, Japanese or German. Mahatma Gandhi would like to meet aggression in his own way, but would certainly meet it, not submit to it. That is the point. Others would meet it in the more normal way, as at present people meet aggressions. That is a question which, when it arises, the Congress will have to decide. How to meet aggression or help in the war involves several issues. In so far as actual military resistance is concerned Mahatma Gandhi prefers his own method. I cannot say what, under particular circumstances, he would advise. He is in spite of his adherence to principles adaptable and he allows others, too, to adapt themselves to particular circumstances. For instance, it is possible a position may arise in India when effective military resistance which presumably will take place beyond her frontiers proves ineffective; the question would arise what should be done inside her frontiers. In the military sense, it is a difficult position and it may be that, from a purely practical consideration apart from pacifism, Mahatma Gandhi's method is considered the best alternative. That is a possibility, because under no circumstances are we prepared to accept the fate of France.

The Congress attitude of non-embarrassment in dealings with the British Government since the outbreak of the war could not be extended in the case of Japanese aggression on India, Congressmen would have to create a spirit of resistance and non-cooperation against new aggressors seeking to establish an empire in India. The existing structure of the Government of India was not suitable for a mass war effort against invaders or for industrial production in a big way.³⁹

Nationalists were delighted to learn that on 18 February, General Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek called on Mahatma Gandhi within an hour of his arrival in Calcutta from Sevagram, and they had pleasant, friendly conversation for four hours. Gandhiji chose to devote much time in telling the Chinese leader and his wife about the genesis and development of satyagraha, a survey of nearly half a century of Gandhian experiment with 'truth in politics, and also in demonstrating his favourite 'weapon of war' against British imperialism, the spinning wheel using a *dhanush-takli*. The Chinese leader on his part demonstrated the age-old urbanity and solemnity of a Chinese gentleman and submitted: 'Your Civil resistance is not mere passivity, I am

sure.' He doubted, however, the efficacy of civil resistance towards the Japanese army, which had perpetrated not a little cruelty on civilian populations in China in the past five years of war. Even the preaching of non-violence could be made impossible, in case of Japanese rule in India. Gandhi then told the Chinese leader, as he had been telling Congress leaders: 'All I can say that God gives me the guidance to react to situations as they arise. Though, therefore, I cannot say how exactly I will react in case of an invasion, I know that God will give me proper guidance.'⁴⁰

Truly for Mahatma Gandhi, God was a factor in Gandhian history, if not in history generally. This extra-political factor eliminated any assumption of historical inevitability or predictability in political movements. In times of crises in Congress history, Gandhi's approval or disapproval (after knowing his own mind and 'the Congress mind'), made a big difference in deciding upon a course of action affecting lakhs of people in the country. In the spring of 1942, Gandhi was using the columns of the *Harijan*, for the promotion of his Constructive Programme, a spirit of service to the nation, and nationalist zeal in organizing for self-sufficiency in food and khadi in villages. On his way to Calcutta to meet Chiang Kai-shek, Gandhi wrote a 'Plea for Calmness', in view of the British reverses in Malaya (the fall of Singapore was affirmed by the British prime minister's broadcast from London on 15 February). Recent events of the war, he said, ought not to create panic in India; Indians ought to learn calmness from the British people who had a knack of surviving tremendous reverses in war. 'More I cannot say, for we are a house divided against itself and there is no living bond between the rulers and the ruled. It is tragic but true. The tragedy is deepened by the knowledge that all parties feel so helpless.' On the train from Calcutta to Wardha, Gandhi wrote an article, 'Criminal Assaults', containing his replies to questions a woman had sent him about molested women and the duties of the public in molestation cases. 'When a woman is assaulted,' wrote Gandhi, 'she may not stop to think in terms of *himsa* or *ahimsa*. Her primary duty is self-protection.' 'God has given her nails and teeth.' 'A woman is worthy of condemnation, only when she is a willing party to her dishonour.' He deplored that the war was unprecedented in its ferocity: 'Man would not fight in this manner, certainly not the gods. Only brutes can. Soldiers drunk with the pride of physical strength loot shops and are not ashamed to take liberties with women. The administration is powerless in the war time to prevent such happenings. The army fulfils their primary need, and they wink at their misdeeds.' Gandhi appealed to the press not to ignore cases of molestation of women by soldiers. 'If the press carried on a sustained agitation, soldiers, white or brown, would be compelled to prevent such misbehaviour.'⁴¹

3. Hopes and Fears

Those who would stake their career as Congressmen of high position and influence by seeking to revive the parliamentary programme, in spite of the known views of the no-compromise group in the Congress leadership, were few in the spring of 1942. Nurtured in 1940 and again in the winter of 1941-2 with expert care and patience, preeminently by C. Rajagopalachari, a senior member of the Working Committee, the plant of 'honourable compromise' and collaboration with the British administration sprouted in 1937-9 and withered in the spring of 1942. Partly because of the poor performance of Great Britain in her war with Japan and the consequent loss of prestige of the government and the war-scare and climate of nervousness in India, but mainly because of the paltry offer tardily made by the British Government through the Cripps Mission, not many Congress leaders supported a policy of office-taking at the centre and in the provinces.

The separation of Rajaji from the Congress in 1942 went through without personal bitterness, but with firm positions taken on both sides in regard to what the Congress should do and should not do in the freedom struggle, while the British Government was engaged in containing the nationalist movement within India and in fighting Japan on the India-Burma border at the same time. Rajaji had opened his campaign for converting the Congress to his opinion soon after the release of Congress satyagrahis from jail in December 1941. His first significant statement in this regard may be found in his convocation address at Lucknow University on 13 December 1941. After noting Mahatma Gandhi's personal attitude towards war in general, Rajaji observed: 'But some of us feel that our struggle cannot simultaneously bear the weight of two such major issues, the issue of British control over India and the demand for its total removal, and the issue of non-participation in war, . . . irrespective of equity or politics of alliance to secure just ends.' In Rajaji's view, nationalist India should co-operate with the British in the War on honourable terms to facilitate the transfer of real power to Indians. Congress non-violence need not stand in the way of co-operation in Britain's war if it were possible for India to view Britain's war as India's war also.

Jawaharlal was quick to see the implications of Rajaji's emphasis at this stage on the desirability of a political compromise to secure just national ends. On 14 December 1941, in replying to a letter from Sampurnanand, the Congress Socialist leader, who pleaded that, in the new phase of struggle, Congress should declare freedom, not mere freedom of speech as in 1940-1, as the goal of satyagraha, Jawaharlal wrote that the British Government's attitude to India made it almost impossible for the Congress to do anything but offer resolute opposition. 'That opposition must be based on a disciplined Congress and on

Gandhiji's support and leadership. Otherwise we become ineffective and weak and lost in a crowd of voices speaking different languages. More particularly our approach or reaction to the British and British policy must be simple, straight, thorough and united as far as possible.' Jawaharlal would not make non-violence in relation to defence the major issue; to do so would be 'to create confusion and major splits in the Congress and in the public mind.'

With a great deal that Rajagopalachari says in his convocation address I agree and yet I entirely disagree with his whole approach to the question. Behind it lies not a theoretical problem but a definite and dangerous policy of lining up with British policy almost as it is. Even from the narrowest view-point of national self-interest this seems to me to be a dangerous policy.⁴²

Early in January 1942, Rajaji introduced in public discussion on Congress policy the possibility of an understanding between the Congress and the Muslim League to clear the road for Congress participation in Indian government and defence. In an interview to the Associated Press on 2 January, Rajaji observed that, if it shared power in the centre and provinces with other parties within the existing constitution of the Government of India, but without prejudice to the major political issues involved in constitution-making in future, even the Muslim League might participate in the war-effort.⁴³ The British Government, however, saw no great need for a settlement with the Congress on terms other than the August Offer of 1940, which the Congress had rejected. Amery wrote to Linlithgow on 5 January 1942:

Certainly Jinnah's attitude lends no colour to the idea that we are nearer solving the deadlock between him and Congress. But I get some quiet amusement from the fact that our Declaration of August 1940 is becoming more and more looked upon as the charter of Muslim and Minority rights. Don't be startled if one of these days you find me referring to it as the Linlithgow Charter!⁴⁴

Lulmley, the Governor of Bombay, wrote to Linlithgow on New Year's Day, 1942: 'The eagerness with which the Congress-minded press has hailed the [Bardoli] resolution as a magnanimous gesture reveals, I think, the wish of many Congressmen, and the intention of the Right Wing, to find some basis of compromise.' He added: 'Whether they will come down to terms which can be at all acceptable is much more doubtful, and will depend, it seems to me, on whether Rajagopalachari's group can get the better of Nehru.'⁴⁵ On 31 January, Linlithgow wrote to Amery: 'Raghavendra Rao brought me yesterday a message at second hand from Rajagopalachariar that he wishes to be sent for by me. Raghavendra told me he did not wish to press me to see him. I am

confident Rajagopalachariar cannot deliver the goods and has no intention of cutting himself adrift from Gandhi and his clique in Working Committee but that he covers for his own ends the personal prestige to be derived by personal contact with Viceroy. I do not for the present intend to send for him.'⁴⁶

British public opinion in January and February 1942 was impressed more by press comments on the Sapru Memorial of 2 January than by any other development in Indian politics. In this memorial, signed by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, and eleven other notable nationalists of liberal-moderate views and of undoubted friendliness towards the British, an appeal was made for 'some bold stroke of far-sighted statesmanship' in Indian policy 'to enlist her wholehearted active co-operation in intensifying war effort'. 'The heart of India must be touched to rouse her on a nation-wide scale to call for service undistracted by internal and domestic differences.' Among the 'war measures', recommended by Sapru and his co-signatories, the first was: 'Conversion and expansion [of the] Central Executive Council into a truly National Government, consisting entirely of non-officials of all recognised parties and communities, and in charge of all portfolios subject only responsibility to the Crown.'⁴⁷ By early February, Tej Bahadur had resigned himself to the conclusion that British statesmanship was unequal to the task in India. He wrote to B. Shiva Rao on 3 February:

I have noticed in the papers that Mr N.M. Joshi proposes to move a resolution in the [Central] Legislature about National Government, the Congress resolution implying responsibility to the Legislature with which personally I am not in agreement. At the same time I believe that whether it is my proposal or the Congress Proposal neither of them has any chance of success so far as the Government is concerned. I have never known more perverse attitude of people in high position than I find at present.⁴⁸

The India debate in the House of Lords in early February indicated that the gesture of the Congress made at the instance of Rajagopalachari at Bardoli and Wardha made little impression on the British Government. The Duke of Devonshire, the Under Secretary of State for India, supported the two-nation theory of the Muslim League, and stated his view that the influence of the Congress was diminishing.

Rajaji's speeches and reported plan of meeting Jinnah aroused suspicion in both Liberal and Congress circles. Jayakar wrote to Rajaji, on 21 January, a letter of friendly warning:

You do not know Jinnah as some of us have known him for the last 30 years and I wish to sound a note of warning in a most friendly way which I hope will be of some help to you. Mr Jinnah is a very relentless, vindictive, vain, bitter and astute man as his public life has proved. In dealing with him, you

have to be very cautious. By his truculence, he has so far overreached every Congress leader including the Mahatma and I am anxious that he should not do so in your case.

On the same date, 21 January, Jayakar wrote to Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, to say: 'I think it is your duty as leader of the Hindu Mahasabha if you disapprove of the 50:50 basis [Jinnah's demand of half of the seats in the Viceroy's Council in case of its expansion by inclusion of 'popular' representation] to immediately take steps to place your view before the Congress leaders and the public generally.' Rajaji wrote to Jayakar on 23 January to say that at present he had no plans of meeting Jinnah and that he had never said that Jinnah's 50:50 demand was acceptable. 'It is no doubt a well-known fact that I made the offer soon after the Poona resolution of the Congress, that if the British Government would accept the proposals I would induce the Congress to accept Jinnah as Premier with authority to form a Cabinet as he liked.' Rajaji assured Jayakar that he also knew the futility of an adventure of meeting Jinnah.⁴⁹

Jawaharlal wrote to Rajaji, on 26 January, a letter of friendly protest against the emphasis Rajaji appeared to have laid, in speeches as reported in newspapers, on the desirability of a compromise policy. Rajaji had the right to say what he was saying in his speeches, but many people were upset and many others were being led to the conclusion that some arrangement would be arrived at with the government. 'They do not therefore worry themselves about the organisational or constructive programme of the Congress; nor do they think much about developing their own strength to face the crisis ahead.' Jawaharlal urged that there was no point in emphasizing the desirability of a compromise, because 'it is much too late for any real compromise to take place, for the very minimum conditions on our part are beyond what the British Government might do. I think there can be nothing more dangerous than our being saddled with responsibility without complete power. Complete power is inconceivable in the present and partial power will make our position worse.' Jawaharlal protested against Rajaji's frequent references to the position of the Muslim League: 'Your references to the Muslim League more or less on the same terms as the Congress also seem to me to be unhappy. This gives a fillip to the dwindling fortunes of the League and irritates large numbers of Congressmen and others.'⁵⁰ Rajaji, however, maintained in his speeches his approach of conditional compromise with the British Government and the League for setting up a national government capable of organizing, on a national scale, India's defence effort against the aggressors. Who would not fight for India, if Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian National Congress lent their whole weight to the cause of the defence of India? Every

able-bodied man among the 400 million people of India would take up a rifle, and India could fight for ten years as bravely as China had been doing for the past five in resisting aggression. Britain had neglected her duty in India, but it was never too late to mend a wrong. The Indian scene could be transformed from one of apathy and fear, if Britain would care to produce, by an act of statesmanship, 'the psychology of freedom' in India, said Rajaji in a speech at a largely attended public meeting in Hindupur, in early February. Rajaji's views usually received respectful notice in the newspapers of moderate opinion throughout 1942, even after his political fortunes, and with them the power of his compromise campaign, appeared to decline with the ending of spring.⁵¹

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the ablest and most famous of the notable public figures in his train of liberal patriots, M.R. Jayakar, were never more critical of British policy than they were at the Non-Party Leaders' Conference at Delhi on 21-2 February 1942. The proceedings of this Non-Party Leaders' Conference, spelling out 'the minimum demand' and feelings of moderates of long experience in public life, especially those who were in the legal profession, also the proceedings of the Azad Muslim Conference on 1 March, deserve notice here, partly because these conferences were of 'Congress sympathisers', but mainly because these proceedings indicated well, in the shape of concrete proposals, what many Indians expected by way of statesmanship from the British Government after the fall of Singapore (15 February). 'To put it shortly,' said Tej Bahadur, presiding over the Non-Party Leaders' Conference on 21 February, 'my conviction is that time has come when the British Government must recognise that in so far as political power is concerned the centre of political gravity should not be Whitehall any longer but Delhi.' The rule of the governors in the provinces did not rouse the pride of the country, though they could collect money and enlist volunteers for the army. The Home Member, Sir Reginald Maxwell, had recently waxed eloquent in the Central Assembly about the dangers of fifth columnists. 'Let him know', said Sir Tej Bahadur, 'that he is after all a bird of passage in this country. We have got to live here; we have got to die here; our interests are far more vital than those of Sir Reginald Maxwell [renewed cheers].' He wondered whether Maxwell was in the true line of descent of Home Members represented by men like Sir William Vincent. The Duke of Devonshire should practise the virtue of silence, he said. 'I also hope that there will be substantial changes in the India Office [applause]. It stands discredited. I do not think that since 1858 when the office was created any other Secretary of State has done greater harm to India than Mr Amery has done [cheers]. He has practically destroyed our faith in the good intentions of England.' Amery had done everything he could to keep the Indian communities apart, though it was expected that he would bring peace and harmony in the country.

Churchill was admirable in courage and he had done the wisest thing by including Sir Stafford Cripps in the Cabinet (19 February). 'But do not overrate the influence of Sir Stafford Cripps. As against him there may be half a dozen men in England who may still be thinking in terms of the times beyond recall.' Regarding the argument of Amery and others that the British Government did not know to whom they should transfer power in India, Tej Bahadur said:

That we have our differences I do not for one moment deny, but that is more or less true of other parts of the world and this war bears ample testimony to it. It will not do for the British to say: 'We are ready to hand over power to you, but we do not know to which hands we should commit that power'. The position is, indeed, curious. Some of us are dismissed as amiable, well-meaning people, but persons without any following. Others are dismissed because they have got quarrelsome followings.

Sapru's appeal was: 'Let England touch our pride and let India rise equal to the occasion.'

Jayakar also made a bitter attack on Great Britain's Indian policy in his speech on the main resolution he moved in the Non-Party Conference at Delhi on 22 February. The morning's newspapers carried the text of General Chiang Kai-shek's farewell message to the Indian people (21 February) in which the great leader of China had said that President Roosevelt or Stalin had not said:

I sincerely hope and confidently believe that our ally Great Britain, without waiting for any demands on the part of the people of India, will as speedily as possible give them real political power so that they may be in a position to further develop their spiritual and material strength and thus realise that their participation in the war is not merely an aid to the anti-aggression nations for securing victory but also a turning point in their struggle for India's freedom.

Referring to this appeal by the leader of China's epic resistance against Japanese aggression, Jayakar said that there was a belief in India that to see a great man was in itself an inspiration, and that one could hope that General Chiang Kai-shek's visit would make people aware of the importance of the qualities of patriotism, courage and endurance, sacrifice and resignation, in fighters. The Government of India was not likely to create these qualities in the Indian fighter. 'This Government,' Jayakar declared, 'has proved itself absolutely incompetent to conduct the war without the cooperation of the people. We want to tell this Government: Move aside. We shall take charge of the conduct of the war, before it is too late!' What guarantee did the government give to the people that they would not repeat in India the three noes in Singapore: no food, no

water, no ammunition, to explain defeat and evacuation? Jayakar expressed his profound dissatisfaction with the existing Central Government, in which all real power was concentrated in British hands in as much as the key portfolios of Defence, Finance, Home and Communications continued to be withheld from Indians. One of the significant points in the resolution Jayakar moved was that, during the period of the war, the Executive Council of the Governor General should be made 'a truly National Government functioning on the basis of joint and collective responsibility of non-officials enjoying public confidence and in charge of all portfolios subject to responsibility to the Crown, and in regard to defence without prejudice to the position of the C-in-C as the executive head of the Defence forces.' In supporting Jayakar's resolution for constitutional changes without delay, Sir B.P. Singh-Roy said that, if such changes were difficult to make by parliamentary legislation in war-time, let the British Government make a beginning by introducing a suitable new convention relating to exercise of real power by Indians.⁵²

More than the undefined words 'national government' noticed in the Congress resolutions and speeches by Congress leaders since 1939, in 1942 the Sapru memorial and the Non-Party Conference's views regarding a non-party national government at the Centre (nationalist control over defence without impairing the executive authority of the Commander-in-Chief, transfer of real power to Indians, and immediate transfer of the political centre of gravity from Whitehall to New Delhi), educated public opinion in India to think in concrete constitutional terms in war-time. In assessing the political situation at the end of February 1942, the Governor of Bihar wrote to the Governor General:

Congress politics have been completely in the background and public attention has been focussed entirely on the Sapru proposals, the Chinese Generalissimo's appeal to the British Government, Stafford Cripps' inclusion in the Cabinet, and Jinnah's threat of 'revolt'. While the Congress Press continues to sneer at the Sapru proposals and affects not to bank too much on Stafford Cripps it was obviously delighted to use Sapru's savage attack on Maxwell as a text for an essay on the 'Real Fifth Column'. It claims that Chiang Kai-shek's message is a full blooded support of the Congress demand for independence and refuses to contemplate anything in the nature of a compromise. Moderate opinion on the other hand has ceased to be moderate in its demand for constitutional modification. It is in full expectation that the British Government is on the point of being stampeded into something in the nature of a 'forward step' — Stafford Cripps' statement in Parliament which was reported yesterday morning lends colour to that view and its tactics are those of 'Squeeze'. 'The British Government is in a hole, let us make the most of the occasion.' There have been continued, and increasingly spiteful, attacks upon the Secretary of State, and the Prime Minister himself has not escaped censure for his alleged casual treatment of the Sapru message. However impervious one may be oneself to this type of

'Blitz' it has been impossible not to remark that it is having an effect on some of our more reliable Indian officers whose nerves are, naturally, not a little shaken by events in Malaya and Burma.

A few days earlier, on 21 February, the Governor of the United Provinces in a report to the governor general wrote: 'The Nehru problem grows more and more difficult. We have told District Magistrates to take action against the small fry who indulge in abuse of Government; and some action is being taken; in all cases it seems to me fully justified. But it puts local officers in a difficult position if action is not taken against leaders; it was Nehru's arrest on the last occasion that eased our position in this Province.' The governor threw some light on the current politics of Congress-Mahasabha-League relations:

Then there is rather an interesting report which started from the Hindu Mahasabha, that there were secret negotiations between Congress and the League. Chaudhri Khaliq-uz-Zaman with reference to this told Mudie as follows: Just before he went to the League Conference in Bengal, he was approached by Mr Rafi Ahmad Kidwai on the subject of an understanding between the Congress and the League. He said that many Congressmen now desired this and asked whether Khaliq would see Nehru on the subject. Khaliq, however, said that was useless as Jinnah and Nehru would eventually have to talk. Jinnah was told of this by Khaliq in Bengal, but so far has not been approached by Nehru. He had however been approached in the same sense by Bhulabhai Desai. Khaliq told Kidwai that the League's Christmas resolution stood as regards co-operating with any party within the present constitution if they were given a reasonable chance of power. As regards the Centre, this would mean that the Congress and the League would join the existing Viceroy's Executive Council and in Section 93 Provinces it would mean Ministries.⁵³

Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh, the Premier of Sind, presided at the meeting of the Board of the All-India Azad Muslim Conference held in Delhi on 28 February and 1 March. Fazlul Haq, the Bengal premier, Asaf Ali, Mian Iftikaruddin, Nurie (ex-minister, Bombay), Ibrahim (ex-minister United Provinces), Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, Humayun Kabir, and Tufail Ahmad, were among the nationalist Muslims who attended these meetings. The Board, representing nine constituent Muslim organizations, was set up in April 1940, with the blessings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who believed that the British Government had done great harm to the Indian Muslims by supporting the two-nation theory and by ignoring, as much as Jinnah did, the existence of no insignificant number of secularist Muslims in the freedom struggle in India. The Azad Muslims demanded independence and Unity for India. The board declared on 1 March that there was general unanimity in the country that

India must forthwith cease to be a dependency, if the common end of defending India from aggression was to be achieved.

Further it feels constrained to conclude that the specious plea of the Secretary of State for India and the British Government that the Muslim League is the authoritative spokesman of the Indian Muslims, and that its attitude and demands constitute an insuperable obstacle in the way of India's freedom is an indefensible subterfuge to mask the disinclination of the British Government to part with power.

The most learned body of Indian Muslims, the Jamiatul-Ulema-i-Hind, was addressed by Maulana Azad on 22 March, in an open session held at Lahore. He said that Muslims should not stand in way of country's freedom by presenting different schemes, and that they should not ask for any safeguards but should try to win the country's freedom first. The Jamiatul-Ulema-i-Hind adopted on 22 March a resolution stating its demand of complete independence for India and its view that the national freedom of the Indian people would include freedom of religion, culture and civilization of followers of Islam. The Jamiat was a staunch supporter of complete provincial autonomy.⁵⁴

Even the Punjab was not free from 'the defeatist mentality' which had spread over India in this period. The Central Intelligence Officer posted at Lahore said in his Fortnightly Report for the second half of February 1942, that 'Defeatism fostered by Congress propaganda, the nationalist press, enemy broadcasts and rumour-mongering has reached a dangerous level.' Amid a welter of speculation, intrigue and suspicion, people were awaiting the British Government's expected announcement of changes in their Indian policy. 'The appointment of Sir Stafford Cripps [to the War Cabinet on 19 February] has not been welcomed by Muslims who regard him as beguiled by Hindu nationalist opinion. The retention of Amery has, however, been approved.' 'Muslims are now torn between adherence to the rigid League formula of 50% representation at the Centre and the desire to grasp as much power as possible while the opportunity is ripe.' The Akalis, loyal supporters of the British war effort, were watching the situation closely. 'Provision is being made against an expected British collapse and the contingency of the *Panth* having to fight for the mastery of the Punjab.' In view of the expected Japanese invasion of India, Jathedar Udham Singh held that it was necessary for the Sikhs to convince the enemy that Sikh troops 'intentionally did not fight well in Malaya and Singapore'. In his report for the second half of March 1942, the Central Intelligence Officer at Lahore wrote that the fall of the Andamans registered a sharp shock in the Punjab. 'Rumours were also set afloat that the worst of the evacuated convicts had been set at liberty in India to loot and pillage like those in

Rangoon.' Anti-British feelings was heightened by stories of British inefficiency, racial discrimination and misbehaviour by troops.

The Central Punjab is also full of rumours of Akali inspiration that the Maharaja of Patiala is a Jap agent, that his Forces have gone over to the enemy in Singapore, that his cousin is now Governor of the island, and that, thanks to Subhas Bose, the Japanese are well disposed to the Sikhs who will make a bid for the Punjab. The Akali rank and file are reported to have been fascinated by these theories, while nervousness has correspondingly increased in the Muslim camp which has taken note of the extent of fifth column activity in Burma.

It was said that the Muslims in the Punjab were beginning to think in terms of *jehad* against a possible combination of Hindus, Sikhs, and the Japanese. 'The rural masses are not appreciably affected, although anxiety about the fate of relatives overseas is said to have been responsible for a substantial drop in recruitment in the central districts.'⁵⁵

The Japanese had claimed that about 73,000 British troops were prisoners of war in Singapore, and that 10,947 more were prisoners in Hong Kong. It was known that many thousands of Indian soldiers were serving in the British armies in Hong Kong, Malaya, and Burma.

5. The Cripps Offer

While Indians were wondering how much more of the British empire would be conquered by the Japanese, the newspapers carried reports of speculations in New Delhi and London regarding possible changes in Britain's Indian policy. These speculations of political commentators and reports of what newspapers in England and America were saying about the urgency of winning popular support for the British war effort in India by associating nationalists in the government of the country heightened expectations of many moderates in Indian politics regarding a transfer of real power to Indians. At the end of February, *The Times* of London said, in an editorial headed 'China and India', that in India 'a new spirit of partnership between equals', 'new forms of mutual obligation', 'new men not rooted in old traditions' were required, if Britain were to retrieve disasters in Asia by learning the lessons of past errors. In New Delhi, political commentators were asserting that the India Office was likely to be abolished, Jinnah was expected to put aside for some time the Pakistan demand, and the viceroy's council would be completely Indianized. In London, in early March, lobbyists talked of acute differences in the British Cabinet on India policy; that while Amery and Eden were said to be supporting the current policy of not going beyond the August Offer of 1940, Churchill and Stafford Cripps were said to be ready to initiate measures to evoke popular enthusiasm

in India for the war because of what had happened in Malaya. Among the formulas under discussion were: a declaration of independence for India on the Egyptian model, providing for a treaty of friendship to be negotiated and made after the war ended; a declaration of India's equality with Britain and the self-governing dominions, which would be effective after the war but providing, as earnest, the abolition of the India Office, the complete unofficialization of the governor general's council and its expansion, *pari passu* the governor general would assume the role of a constitutional head of an executive council working on the principle of joint responsibility and consultation. Labour members in Parliament were known to be pro-Congress in their attitude, while the Conservatives dominating the Cabinet and Parliament for the past seven years were not willing to transfer power to Indians. On 4 March, a number of Labour members of the House of Commons tabled a motion stating 'That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived for a plain declaration by His Majesty's Government that it recognises the National Independence of India and is prepared to negotiate with the leaders of the Indian National Movement forthwith on the means of transfer of sovereign authority to Indian provisional Government.'

The Indian question assumed great proportions in England at this time, wrote press correspondents from London. On 11 March, the prime minister made a statement to the Commons that Sir Stafford Cripps, a member of the War Cabinet, would be sent to India to seek the assent of 'the essential elements of the Indian world' to a just and final solution which the Cabinet proposed to make in regard to the Indian problem. 'He carries with him the full confidence of His Majesty's Government and he will strive in their name to procure the assent not only from the Hindu majority but also from those great minorities amongst which the Muslims are the most important.' The government had decided, said the prime minister, not to publish their scheme for India without first assuring themselves that the scheme would win from Indians 'a reasonable and practical measure of acceptance and thus promote concentration of all thought and energies upon the defence of the native soil'. The prime minister observed that classes, creeds, and races in India were not agreed upon a constitution for a new kind of government in the country.⁵⁶

Sardar Patel, Rajaji, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Sarojini Naidu, Bhulabhai, Shankarrao Deo, and Dr Khan Sahib, who had taken the place of his brother Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the Working Committee, attended a meeting of the Committee held at Wardha on 18 March. They discussed matters arising out of the nearer approach of the war, and decided on issuing fresh instructions to the PCCs as to how the organization should function in meeting emergencies. After the meeting, in reply to

questions by the press, Maulana Azad explained the Congress viewpoint and observed that there was no question of reconsidering the Congress decision in regard to the August Offer of 1940 which had been buried deep. The president would see Cripps on behalf of the Congress, and if he was satisfied that the British Government's scheme fell short or would serve no useful purpose, then he would reject it and no meeting of the Working Committee would be summoned. Next day, the Working Committee decided that the Congress president should see Cripps but, in view of the request of Cripps, other leaders like Gandhiji, Jawaharlal, Rajagopalachari, Bhulabhai Desai, and Sardar Patel might also be called later on by Maulana Azad, after his first meeting with Cripps.

Cripps arrived at Karachi by plane on 22 March, and on that day at Madras. Rajaji issued an eloquent statement to the press: 'What should be searched for by all of us is an energising stimulus for national effort and sacrifice and a provisional executive determined to save the people from foreign aggression, that commands the trust and love and therefore the whole-hearted energy of the people.' Though seemingly political, the Cripps mission was strategic and military in essential character, said Rajaji. 'The object of Sir Stafford Cripps' visit is to make India less vulnerable, to prevent her becoming an easy prey to Japan like Malaya and Burma. The question therefore is not how much to ask or how much to take as a reasonable political compromise. It is how to make the Indian people forget their hostility to Britain and give up their apathy in regard to the military position.' Nationalists should appeal to Britain 'for courage and imagination on the part of the British to place an ideal before the Indian people worth fighting for and dying'. Aggression would not wait, and Indians could not postpone or shirk the responsibility for self-defence. As to the proper attitude in responding to whatever proposals Cripps would bring from the War Cabinet, Rajaji said: 'It is absurd to mass together at the present moment all that requires to be considered in the settlement of a permanent constitution.'

Except Rajaji, no Congress leader of all-India stature was at the time, in public, strongly urging Congress participation in government for organizing the defence of India on a popular basis. Goodwill towards Stafford Cripps personally was widespread among Congressmen, because of his association in the past with members of the Congress, especially with Jawaharlal Nehru. Cripps mentioned that he had friends in the Congress in his statement to the press on his arrival in New Delhi on 23 March. On the same date, the *Hindusthan Standard*, a pro-Congress daily published from Calcutta, printed in facsimile an extract from Cripps' handwritten draft of an article published in the *Congress Socialist* on 11 January 1936. It read: 'I do not myself believe that any British Government could in fact consent to Indian self-determination in the full

sense of that word, unless it was so consciously socialist that it was prepared for the break-up of the British Empire. That break-up would involve the most serious problem for internal British economy, a problem that could only be solved by a complete socialist programme.' Undercurrents of scepticism, insistence upon bargaining, even malevolence towards the British Government, were noticed by a provincial governor in his report dated 24 March to the governor general. The first public reaction to Cripps's arrival was, however, favourable, and the governor felt that there was no doubt whatsoever that India was keyed up to a high pitch of expectancy.⁵⁷

Seven days after his arrival and the beginning of talks at New Delhi with officials, members of Viceroy's Council, political leaders, non-party leaders of opinion, a delegation from the princes, representatives of religious communities, Cripps published, on 30 March, the War Cabinet's Draft Declaration for Discussion with Indian Leaders: 'The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and the other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs.' Therefore, the British Government made the following declaration:

- (a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.
- (b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the constitution-making body.
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to
 - (i) the right of any Province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding Provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new Constitution, giving them the same full status as Indian Union, and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

- (ii) the signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This Treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with the undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any

restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in the future its relationship to the other Member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its Treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation.

- (d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities: Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of the hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of the representatives of British India as a whole, and with the same powers as the British Indian members.

Having thus outlined the future with provisions which the Congress could hardly welcome: dominion status accompanied with restrictions which could make real freedom an illusion; a constitution-making body in which there would be non-representative elements; an Indian Union which did not mean United India; positive contemplation of 'non-acceding Provinces' and Indian States choosing to form one or more than one separate dominion, and of some Indian rulerships choosing to maintain their existing treaty relations with Great Britain; the War Cabinet's statement brought by Cripps proceeded to propose for the interim period an arrangement which for practical purposes meant no great departure from the Viceroy's Declaration of 8 August 1940:

- (e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

On the basis of this Draft Declaration, Sir Stafford Cripps made a tremendous and praiseworthy effort, actuated more by an Englishman's sense of service to his nation than by any personal ambition in parliamentary life, to obtain for Great Britain the moral and active support of representative popular elements in the administration and in the war effort in British India. In course of his negotiations at New Delhi, Cripps had meetings separately with representatives of the main and even secondary elements in Indian public life. It was, however, widely felt that Cripps sought above all the acceptance by the Congress and the Muslim League of the War Cabinet's proposals, and that he tended to pay only courtesy attention to the arguments and demands put to him by other parties. Lord Linlithgow did not welcome the Cripps Mission, and the Government of India did their best in March 1942 to maintain the policy of August 1940 and the powers and position of the Governor General under the Acts of 1919 and 1935 unimpaired. Within a week of Cripps's arrival at New Delhi, the viceroy feared that Sir Stafford might steal 'His Excellency's cheese to bait his own trap'.⁵⁸

On the afternoon of 25 March, Cripps received Maulana Azad and Asaf Ali.

I read the document slowly through asking for any interruptions upon points that did not seem too clear or satisfactory but I was not stopped until the document was completed and the only points which seemed to interest him [Azad] at all were those concerning the immediate steps in paragraph (e). He at once fixed upon the question of Defence and stated that, according to Congress view, it was necessary, in order to mobilise effectively the forces of the Indian people, to give the Indians the control of the defence of their country.

Cripps thought Azad had no further suggestion to make.⁵⁹

Two days later, on 27 March, Cripps had a longer interview with Mahatma Gandhi, who went to Delhi at Cripps's request to meet him.

I gave Mr Gandhi the document to read after a few short introductory remarks, and he impressed upon me that he had not, of course, anything to do with Congress officially and that any views he expressed would not necessarily be those of the Congress. In the first instance he expressed the very definite view that Congress would not accept the document, basing this upon two main points — firstly, the paragraph dealing with the Indian States, secondly, that dealing with accession or non-accession of Provinces. Curiously enough, he also, in rather a vague way, questioned the point as regards the retention of Defence in the British hands.⁶⁰

On 28 March, Cripps had an interview, 'an extremely interesting and very instructive talk', with Rajagopalachari, who came to see him as the

ex-Premier of Madras, not as a representative of the Congress. 'But in fact he pointed out to me the portions of the document which were likely to be picked upon by Congress. The first was the use of the word "Dominion", and he suggested that if we could use the words "Free Member State" instead of "Dominion" it would be an advantage. Secondly he dealt with the right of non-accession, though he did not stress this so strongly as the third point, which was the question of Defence.' He begged of Cripps to make some adjustment of the final paragraph in order to meet what he knew would be Nehru's reaction which would be of crucial importance in the Congress Working Committee's decision on the scheme. Personally, Rajaji was in favour of its acceptance.

On the same day, Cripps saw Maulana Azad again, and they had a great deal of arguing about the point relating to the defence minister. This point was slightly modified in the direction suggested by Rajaji to indicate the government's seeking of 'the co-operation of the peoples of India' in organizing the resources of India for defence, when the document was published on 30 March.⁶¹

On 29 March, Cripps had a conversation with Pandit G.B. Pant and B.G. Kher, at the Birla House, at the instance of Gandhiji. Pandit Pant tried to convince Cripps that it was undesirable to encourage, as the War Cabinet's proposal did, the non-acceding desires of the Muslim League. Kher raised the Indian States question and the defence issue. These points, and also the use of the word 'Dominion', were raised by Jawaharlal and Maulana Azad in their two-hour interview with Cripps, on the same day.⁶² It was clear to Cripps from these conversations that, unless he could go some way to meet the Congress view on the defence question, there was little prospect of success. On 30 March, Cripps therefore wrote to the Congress president and the president of the Muslim League a letter making it clear that, while the division of responsibility between His Majesty's Government and the Government of India would be as stated in paragraph (e) of the Declaration, 'The Viceroy would be prepared to consult with Indian leaders on this basis to see whether it were possible to designate an Indian to some office connected with the Government of India's defence responsibilities, without in any way impinging upon the functions and duties of the Commander-in-Chief, either in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the armed forces in India, or as the Member of the Executive Council in charge of defence.' Bhulabhai Desai saw Cripps on 30 March; he was extremely friendly. 'He really came for the purpose of getting from me the best ammunition that he could for answering the objections which were being raised in the Working Committee to the scheme.'⁶³

Jawaharlal appeared serious and worried about the Indian situation, when Cripps interviewed him on 30 March. He stressed the point that Indian opinion was in a dangerous state; it had been exacerbated against the British by discriminatory treatment of Indian refugees, the growing unemployment in certain industries, the difficulties as to food distribution and shortage of wheat associated with rumours that the British had sent Indian wheat to Persia, the growing disbelief in the capacity of Great Britain to defend India effectively, the tendency for a reversion to sympathy for Japan which had been demonstrated widely during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. Jawaharlal explained the difficulties of the Congress Working Committee regarding the War Cabinet proposals, but Cripps felt fairly certain that it was the influence of Gandhi and his supporters, who pointed to the undesirability of Congress leaders associating themselves in any way with the war effort, which would be the decisive factor in the situation rather than any particular provision of the scheme itself. Jawaharlal was doing his utmost to gain support for acceptance but felt that he was fighting a losing battle in the Working Committee. Another member of the Working Committee, Pattabhi Sita-ramayya, had an interview with Cripps on 31 March; 'he wished some immediate steps to be taken to free the Indian states people from the autocracy of their rulers though he was prepared for the rulers to remain as constitutional monarchs.'⁶⁴

On 1 April, having been privately informed that the Congress had already drafted a resolution rejecting the proposals, Cripps wrote to Maulana Azad a letter inviting him and Pandit Nehru to meet the Commander-in-Chief, General Wavell, to discuss the defence portfolio question. The invitation was accepted, but on the afternoon of the next day, 2 April, the Congress president and Pandit Nehru called on Cripps and handed him the resolution of the Working Committee framed before Cripps had offered to ask Wavell to meet them. They told Cripps that the resolution would not be published at this time and gave him to understand that, if the committee could be satisfied in regard to defence, the remainder of the resolution might be subject to substantial modification. On the evening of 4 April, the interview between the Congress leaders and the commander-in-chief took place, but Cripps could form no estimate of the reaction of the two leaders. In a telegram to Churchill sent on 4 April, Cripps made this estimate of the situation: 'I must point out that if Congress do not accept no one will dare to state that they will accept the scheme. I should expect it to be turned down by all sections including Muslim League although they have in fact passed a unanimous resolution accepting it in their Working Committee.' Personally, Cripps believed that chances of acceptance by the Congress would be best if, subject to written conditions guarding the position and powers of the commander-in-chief, the defence ministry were handed over to an

Indian. Among other things, the general psychological effect of the Congress coming in would be good especially in the East and the Middle East. 'In the event of acceptance by Congress I am informed from a good source that the non-violent group will probably retire from all participation in the Working Committee during the war and will leave the other leaders (Maulana Azad, Nehru and Rajagopalachari) to carry on.'⁶⁵

To enable Cripps to make a last effort to save his mission from failure, the War Cabinet authorized him to offer the creation of a new portfolio connected with defence which could be held by an Indian member of the governor-general's executive. Accordingly, on 7 April, Cripps wrote to Azad and Jinnah a letter proposing that a new member entitled 'Defence Co-ordination Member' could be appointed, from among Indians, to the Executive Council, while the C-in-C, under the title 'War Member', retained his position in the Council and full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India. At this point, President Roosevelt's personal representative on supply matters, Colonel Louis Johnson, who had just arrived in India, participated as a go-between in Cripps's conversations with the Congress leaders. After two conversations with Nehru, Johnson told Cripps, on 7 April, that he understood that the British offer would be more acceptable to Congress if it purported at least to transfer 'the Defence Department' to Indian hands, even though this were accompanied by the transfer to 'the War Member' (the C-in-C), of those functions of the Defence Department which the British Government held it necessary for the C-in-C to retain. On this basis, negotiations and consultations regarding the list of retained functions of the C-in-C and the functions of the Defence Department were maintained by Cripps and the Congress. But a sentence in a letter from Cripps to Azad written on 7 April, aroused in the minds of Congress leaders misgivings about the entire basis of their conversations with Cripps since 25 March. This sentence read: 'Although, as the Working Committee have fully understood, it is impossible to make any change in the existing constitution during the period of hostilities, His Majesty's Government are anxious to give representative Indians the maximum possible participation in the government during that period.' On the afternoon of 9 April, Azad and Jawaharlal went to see Cripps, and they discussed at length first the functions of the Defence Department, and later the more general matter of the operation of the council under clause (e) of the Draft Declaration. Azad and Jawaharlal asked for definite assurances and a convention as to what would happen, but Cripps, being aware of the fresh reiteration by Linlithgow and Churchill of their strong views against a quasi-cabinet in India, could only tell the Congress leaders that it was a matter for them to discuss with the viceroy. Cripps explained that it was for the viceroy to decide on the matters relating to the operation of the government, even under a new set-up

accommodating representative Indians in the executive council. The earlier suggestions as to the quasi-cabinet procedure, Cripps had made, had been subject to the broad condition 'within the existing constitution'. On his part, Jawaharlal made clear his reluctance to work with an autocratic viceroy and the old Government of India machine. That night, Jawaharlal wrote to Johnson to say that the talk he and Azad just had with Cripps was entirely unsatisfactory. 'It was not just the wording of the formula in regard to Defence. One could come to an agreement about this. But the whole picture that emerged from our talks took me aback and I suddenly discovered that the very premises on which we had been discussing this subject during the last four days were unjustified. The whole structure that we had tried to build up so laboriously in our minds was without any real foundation.' Next morning, Johnson showed Jawaharlal's letter to Cripps, and learnt from him that Churchill would give no approval unless Wavell and Linlithgow unqualifiedly endorsed any change in the Draft Declaration Cripps wanted. Linlithgow and Wavell were opposed to any departure from the document of the Draft Declaration, or any alteration of the position of the viceroy's council.⁶⁶

On 10 April, just before lunch, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, a pro-Congress member of the executive council, informed the private secretary to the viceroy that the Congress Working Committee were drafting a letter to Cripps. 'Vallabhbhai Patel had thought that the 'Cabinet' was going to get absolute authority except in the sphere of defence; namely, that the viceroy would be bound to act on the advice of the majority except in that sphere, and that this would be done by convention.' Another pro-Congress member of the council, M.S. Aney, informed the private secretary, soon after lunch, that there had been a hitch in the negotiations, and suggested that the viceroy send for Nehru or possibly Nehru and Cripps together to see if the viceroy could clarify the matter, Linlithgow declined to act on the lines suggested by Aney. Maulana Azad's letter of rejection arrived at Cripps's house at 7 p.m. 'The peril that faces India affects us more than it can possibly affect any foreigner and we are anxious and eager to do our utmost to face it and overcome it. But we cannot undertake responsibilities when we are not given the freedom and power to shoulder them effectively and when an old environment continues which hampers the national effort.' The Congress were yet prepared to assume responsibility provided a truly National Government were formed in India. 'We are prepared to put aside for the present all questions about the future, though as we have indicated we hold definite views about it. But in the present the National Government must be a Cabinet Government with full power, and must not merely be a continuation of the Viceroy's Executive Council.' Azad said that unfortunately, to Congress disadvantage, Cripps had referred both

privately and in course of public statements since his arrival in India to a National Government and a cabinet consisting of ministers. 'These words have a certain significance and we had imagined that the new government would function with full powers as a Cabinet with the Viceroy acting as a constitutional head; but the new picture that you placed before us [at the interview on 9 April] was really not very different from the old, the difference being one of degree and not of kind.' The Cripps Mission negotiations with the Congress closed with Cripps' reply, written after dinner that night (10 April), to Azad, saying: 'In a country such as India where communal divisions are still so deep an irresponsible majority of this kind [Cabinet Government with full power] is not possible.'⁶⁷

On 11 April, Maulana Azad wrote to Cripps:

You have put forward an argument in your letter which at no time during our talks was mentioned by you. You refer to the 'absolute dictatorship of the majority'. It is astonishing that such a statement should be made in this connection at this stage. This difficulty is inherent in any scheme of a mixed Cabinet formed to meet an emergency, but there are many ways in which it can be provided for. Had you raised this question we would have discussed it and found a satisfactory solution.

Azad reminded Cripps that at their very first talk, Azad had pointed out that, as soon as the British Government made up its mind to transfer real power and responsibility, the communal or like questions could be tackled successfully by those concerned. 'We are convinced that if the British Government did not pursue a policy of encouraging disruption, all of us to whatever party or group we belonged would be able to come together and find a common line of action; but unhappily even in this grave hour of peril the British Government is unable to give up its wrecking policy.' On the same day, 11 April, the Congress President released to the press, the Azad-Cripps correspondence and the resolution of the Congress Working Committee given to Cripps confidentially on 2 April. This Resolution declared: 'These proposals, which have been made at the very last hour because of the compulsion of events, have to be considered not only in relation to India's demand for independence but more especially, in the present grave war crisis, with a view to meeting effectively the perils and dangers that confront India and envelop the world.' The people of India were willing to line themselves with the progressive forces of the world and to assume burdens that had arisen since 1939. 'An essential condition was the freedom of India, for only the realisation of present freedom could light the flame which would illuminate millions of hearts and move them to action.' The Congress objected to the War Cabinet proposals mainly on four points:

the promise of 'Dominion', the position of the Indian States and their people, the provision for the non-accession of the Provinces, and responsibility in the matter of defence. The Congress view of the Cripps mission negotiations was explained at length by Jawaharlal in an interview to the press at New Delhi on 12 April, the day Cripps left India. Congress had accepted the idea of a composite cabinet formed from different groups representing different ideologies in the country. 'At no stage did we discuss the number of the members from the different groups. 'The communal issue in any form was never discussed except that Sir Stafford Cripps often repeated one formula, that he was only concerned with agreement between three groups in India, the British Government, the Congress and the Muslim League.' For two weeks past, the Congress had been trying to come to some kind of settlement which was honourable. Regarding his personal position, Jawaharlal said: 'For the first time in these twenty-two years, I swallowed many a bitter pill when I said I was prepared to agree to many things so as somehow to come to an agreement.' In another statement to the press, made at Allahabad on 15 April, Jawaharlal declared: 'We want to say to them [the British rulers], as I have said before in the words of a great Englishman; 'You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God go!' We want much. Our appetite for freedom is insatiable.'⁶⁸ After the failure of the Cripps mission negotiations, Jawaharlal's no-compromise attitude, an important element in the formulation of Congress satyagraha policy since 1940, hardened, though like other members of the Working Committee in 1942 he waited, before making up his mind, because of the invasion threat, for a lead from Mahatma Gandhi in the matter of mass satyagraha.

Gandhiji had left Delhi on 4 April with the advice to the Congress Working Committee that they should follow the lead of the Congress president, Maulana Azad, in the Cripps mission negotiations. He did not intervene in any way once the Working Committee had agreed to consider the Draft Declaration brought by Cripps. He had made it clear in his address to the AICC in January at Wardha that personally he did not favour office-taking by Congressmen and Congress participation in the war effort.⁶⁹ On 19 April, the *Harijan* published Gandhi's article 'That ill-Fated Proposal', in which he deplored Cripps' decision to serve 'the Moloch of imperialism'. 'The fact is that Sir Stafford Cripps, having become part of the imperial machinery, unconsciously partook of its quality. Such is its strength.' Cripps should have known, said Gandhi, that at least the Congress would not look at dominion status, besides objecting to the splitting up of India and the defence clauses in the proposals. Like Gandhi, Congressmen generally were sympathetic towards Cripps personally but were not annoyed with the decision of the

Working Committee rejecting the Cripps proposals. The Central Intelligence Officer posted at Nagpur reported to New Delhi: 'The press, both Congress and otherwise, deplored the breakdown and generally held that the fault lay not with the Congress but with Sir Stafford Cripps, who, it was contended, should have given way on the points of difference.' Those Congress leaders in the Central Provinces who desired a return to office and the plums and the intelligentsia of the left who desired the destruction of fascism and the defeat of Japan were genuinely sorry, but another group, also originally hopeful of a settlement, were now 'relieved that Indians have been spared Governmental responsibility which, they think, would have meant such unpopular measures as conscription and enhanced taxation and would also have placed Indians in the unambiguous position of enemies of Japan.'⁷⁰ Extreme leftists, particularly Forward Blocists, who were opposed to any compromise on the issue of complete independence, welcomed the failure of the Cripps mission, nearly all Congressmen expressed the opinion that the Working Committee's decision was the only one which could, under the circumstances, have been taken because of the defence issue. 'In actual fact there are indications that many Congress leaders are considerably relieved that the burden of India's Defence at the present moment does not rest on the shoulders of a National Government and that they will be free to blame the British Government for any difficulties which may arise in future.'⁷¹

In the Punjab, the blame for the breakdown of the Cripps mission was laid by all parties at Britain's door; it was contended that Britain was never sincere, and Sir Stafford was portrayed as the dupe of Messrs Churchill and Amery.⁷² In Peshawar, Dr Khan Sahib gave his opinion, 'that the mass of Congress would never have agreed to anything short of complete independence, and that Nehru would have rejected Cripps's proposals at the outset, but for the fear of exposing Congress to the criticism of intransigence.'⁷³ In Sind, the premier, Allah Baksh, asserted that, at the end of discussions, Sir Stafford went back on what he had been saying about a real cabinet at New Delhi.⁷⁴ In Calcutta, the European business community felt 'that any future offers to India will probably commence where these left off whatever happens in the meantime and so Congress has lost nothing by turning them down but has evaded accepting responsibility at a critical time.' The Bengal premier, Fazlul Huq did not regret, said the Central Intelligence Officer, that the Cripps mission failed, but was somewhat apprehensive lest the Congress came to an understanding with the Muslim League.

The general public was disappointed but was on the whole more concerned with the danger of invasion; the cases of detained or imprisoned communists were being reviewed and releases effected under orders of the Government of India, following a parting request from

Cripps; there was also information that the Congress Socialist Party advocated a policy of neutrality for the Congress with regard to the war.⁷⁵

'Throughout last week,' wrote the Bihar governor on 15 April, 'the political barometer was overworked. If one day it recorded "Set Fair" the next day a serious depression had generally set in.' The Bombay governor wrote to the governor-general on 24 April that, as was always the case in Bombay, it was not easy to assess precisely the public reactions to the failure of the Cripps mission. He had heard that local, informed Congress opinion was quite prepared to accept the provision of non-accession in order to obtain Muslim agreement to discussions about a future constitution. 'This view is said to find a good deal of support amongst local Congress people, although it has not been declared openly, and all nationalist newspapers condemn the proposals mainly on the ground that they would vivisect India.' The governor was inclined to think that the net result of the failure of the Cripps mission was probably some gain; the Muslims were satisfied with the result, and the Parsees were said to be generally relieved that, for a time at any rate, Congress would not regain power. Ambedkar, one of the supporters of the government, displayed bitterness; he told the governor that 'the proposals went back on the August Declaration', and that, with the example of the Irish Treaty before him, 'the suggestion that minorities could be safeguarded by means of a treaty, was a very poor joke'. Ambedkar felt that the Depressed Classes had been let down by the British Government.⁷⁶

Regarding the attitude of the Sikhs, the Central Intelligence Officer at Lahore reported: 'The British War Cabinet's proposals, coupled with the attitude of Congressmen, like Rajagopalachari's, convinced the Sikh mind that, unless strongly resisted now, the establishment of Pakistan would only be a question of time.' The Akalis and the Hindu Mahasabhaites had joined in April in frantic anti-Pakistan propaganda. In May, Intelligence reports said that Sikhs were readjusting their position: the Akalis were negotiating with the Unionist party; the Congress Akalis (Baldev Singh, Gurbaksh Singh of Batala and others) were in agreement with Master Tara Singh's current policy of reconciliation. Master Tara Singh had declared that government would appease the Sikhs. 'These assurances he says have come through Major Short, Civil Liaison Officer, Lahore, and Col. Louis Johnson, and they materialized in the statements of Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr Amery in the British Parliament.' Tara Singh believed Akalis would be represented in the Punjab cabinet, and a Sikh would be included in the Viceroy's Executive Council; as regards post-war arrangements, there would be a redistribution of provincial boundaries to enable the Sikhs to exercise provincial autonomy and cultural self-determination. The Akalis looked to Britain for support, and there was now no more talk of seeking assistance from the

Japanese. Sampuran Singh, Charan Singh Orara and Kapur Singh of Ludhiana, were said to be sympathetic to Tara Singh's policy but would take some time to desert the Congress.⁷⁷

In Madras, Rajagopalachari's appreciation of the political situation was decisively influenced by the stress of the invasion scare and his conviction that compromise and the parliamentary programme should be pursued by Congressmen to return to power in the provinces to provide popular leadership in government in a country of disarmed and helpless masses. Soon after returning from Delhi on 15 April, he was seized with the problem of restoring public morale in Madras. In a press interview, he is alleged to have said that 'everything that a cultured nation can do, without the assistance of the State organization, should be done for maintaining internal order.' Almost all government offices had been shifted to various centres in the province. 'In all, about three lakhs of people have left the Madras City either by train or by road during the fortnight and the exodus from the City and the coastal districts to the interior still continues.' The sinking of many ships off the coast, the air raids on Vizagapatam and Cocanada, followed by an air-raid alarm in Madras, and many troop movements and government warning of danger, gave rise to a lot of alarm. The Madras Governor reported on 18 April: 'These events have completely over-shadowed the political situation, but the general reactions to the failure of the Cripps' proposals are: (1) In Congress circles deep disappointment and annoyance with the Working Committee, and (2) in all other circles, i.e., Justice, Scheduled Classes, etc., a deep sense of relief.' The Governor had seen Rajagopalachari, Kasturi Srinivasan of *The Hindu*, and Subbarayan, and they all were very upset and said that Congress had made a fatal mistake. Rajagopalachari blamed Cripps for the breakdown and told the governor that he was all for the acceptance of office. 'He also told me that if he fails (in another attempt at the Working Committee this month), he is going to break away from the Central Committee and run an independent show down here.' Further, if he came back at the head of a Coalition Government, Rajagopalachari would make it a War Government abstaining from controversial legislation. On 20 April, the Madras Congress Working Committee was said to have met for nine hours and decided to put before the Congress MLAs and MLCs a resolution that a Coalition Government should be set up in Madras. Rajaji was reported to have said that the Justice Party, Muslim League (if allowed by Jinnah), Christians, Scheduled Classes and even one European, would be included in this Coalition Government.⁷⁸

On the morning of 23 April, *The Hindu* carried a leader pleading for a settlement with the Muslim League to present to Britain a united national demand for setting up a National Cabinet. In the afternoon, excitement ran high in Congress circles in the town because Congress MLAs

(local and central), MLCs, presidents and secretaries of district and central Congress committees in the Madras Presidency, were meeting under the chairmanship of Rajaji, in the Hindi Prachar Sabha hall. Bulusu Sambamurthi, the Speaker of the Assembly, T. Prakasam, T.S.S. Rajan, P. Subbarayan, B. Gopala Reddi, Munuswami Pillai, S. Ramathan, ex-ministers were present. The proceedings were not open to the press: It was reported that in all twenty-five members of the Madras Congress Legislature party participated in the six-hour long discussions on two resolutions, both challenging the official policy of the Congress Working Committee of which Rajaji was yet a member. The first resolution, passed by 37 votes against six and three remaining neutral, called for efforts by the Congress for the removal of

every obstacle in the way of the establishment of a national administration to face the present situation; and therefore, inasmuch as the Muslim League has insisted on the recognition of the right of separation of certain areas from united India upon the ascertainment of the wishes of the people of such areas as a condition precedent for united national action at this moment of grave national danger, this party is of opinion and recommends to the All-India Congress Committee that to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a national government at this grave crisis for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is a most unwise policy and it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil and acknowledge the Muslim League's claim for separation should the same be persisted in when the time comes for framing a constitution for India and thereby remove all doubts and fears in this regard, and to invite the Muslim League for a consultation for the purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a national government to meet the present emergency.

The second resolution, moved from the chair and passed by 39 votes against two, five remaining neutral, said that the Madras Legislature Congress party voiced

the general feeling in this part of the country that there should be at this critical juncture a popular government in this province doing its utmost to secure the requisite conditions for the people to play their part. This party is of opinion further that to facilitate united and effective action in this regard by such a popular government, the Muslim League should be invited to participate in it. This party, therefore, requests that the All-India Congress Committee to permit this party to take steps to this end, notwithstanding the general all-India policy followed by the Congress.⁷⁹

The Madras Resolutions left no doubt in the public mind that Rajaji and his supporters favoured Congress participation in the government's war effort. The second resolution was obviously framed under the

assumption that the British Government would be willing to lift Section 93 in the Madras Presidency and invite Rajaji to form a coalition government. A split in the Madras Congress organization and a big verbal battle in the AICC scheduled to meet at the end of the month at Allahabad, a stronghold of the no-compromise champion, Pandit Nehru, appeared unavoidable. Appearing as an aftermath of the Cripps mission, the Madras resolutions pleased the government but produced mild consternation in Congress circles. Rajendra Prasad and Jawaharlal had seriously tried but failed to make an entente with Jinnah in 1939; after the Cripps mission proposals and negotiations, the League was more friendly to the British Government than ever before because the War Cabinet appeared ready to consider the possibility of creating a Pakistan in the future out of the British Indian Empire. Maulana Azad preferred to concentrate on the constitutional aspect of the question in dealing with Rajaji's new move. On 25 April at Calcutta, the President issued to the press a statement declaring:

I would assure you that any personal relationship, howsoever dear to me, cannot deter me for a moment from discharging my duty as president of the Congress. I may point out in this connection that in the Congress organisation only the provincial Congress committee is the competent body to represent provincial views not the Congress Legislature party. Despite this fact, the party itself was not fully represented in the meeting. The information about the meeting indicates that out of 191 Congress members of both the Houses only 52 attended the meeting. And when votes were taken, only 36 participated in the voting. It clearly shows that it would be wrong to attribute the decision to the majority of Congressmen of the province.⁸⁰

On returning from a hectic tour of Assam, Jawaharlal declared at Calcutta, on 25 April, that Congress would make no approach to Britain for office-taking: 'We are not going to act as Viceroy's secretaries and advisers or in any other subordinate capacity.' 'So far as we are concerned, our course is perfectly clear. We shall submit neither to British imperialism nor to Japanese aggression. We may have to face disaster but we shall keep our self-respect and honour intact. Out of that very disaster a free and independent India will arise.' Questioned about his reaction to the Madras Resolutions sponsored by Rajaji, Jawaharlal observed that he was greatly surprised by the extraordinary and undesirable action by a member of the Working Committee, but as it was not usual for members of the Working Committee to criticize each other in public statements, he did not wish at this stage to say more than express his disagreement with the approach adopted in the Madras Resolutions.⁸¹ In his interviews to the press and speeches since the failure of the Cripps mission, Jawaharlal revealed his combative mood towards both the British and the Japanese varieties of imperialism. But more than at any

other time since 1939, Jawaharlal repeatedly gave expression to his sympathy for the Allied or the United Nations cause and to his readiness to defend India with arms and to lead a national war effort by free India, in alliance with Great Britain, China and America, against aggressors. Jawaharlal would not reduce his opposition to the British rule, till a clear unequivocal promise of independence was made by the British Government to turn a relationship of servitude into co-operation between equals.

Maulana Azad had declared it in his presidential address at Ramgarh in 1940 that the only impediment to an alliance between India and Great Britain and the Allies in this war was the refusal by Great Britain to recognize India's right to independence and to a truly National Government in the interim period. The ideals of democratic freedom for which the Indian National Congress stood were similar to those cherished by Britain and America. Rajaji did not give up the basic demand for independence, but he appeared unwilling in 1942 to press this point hard and with a sense of urgency in dealing with the British proposals. Azad, Jawaharlal and Rajaji agreed in the matter of taking up the sword to fight the aggression of Japan; they were agreed in their sympathy for the Allies. But Azad and Jawaharlal were firmly opposed to Rajaji's politics of expediency, combined with his obvious readiness to split the Congress organization in Madras and to challenge the Working Committee's primacy in the formulation of Congress policy, neither Maulana Azad nor Jawaharlal could approve of any step injuring the Congress organization and Congress self-respect; for them, Congress self-respect meant national self-respect at any time. On his part, Rajaji questioned the collective wisdom of the Working Committee in 1942.

5. The Swing to Direct Action

The *Harijan* of 26 April 1942 carried an article by Mahatma Gandhi replying to a correspondent's question: 'What will happen to your *Ahimsa* when Jawaharlal openly advocates violence and Rajaji wants arms and military training for the whole nation?' Gandhi replied that the situation did appear awful, but it was not really as awful as it appeared to his correspondent. Jawaharlal's newly developed fancy for guerilla warfare would be 'a nine day's wonder' without any effect. 'It is foreign to the Indian soil. Twenty-two years' incessant preaching and practice of non-violence, however imperfect it has been, could not be suddenly obliterated by the mere wish of Jawaharlal and Rajaji, powerful though their influence is. I am, therefore, not perturbed by the 'apostasy' either of Jawaharlal or Rajaji. They will return to non-violence with renewed zeal strengthened by the failure of their effort.' Gandhiji declared that 'Non-violent non-cooperation' was the most effective substitute for violent warfare under Indian conditions; he believed that the masses would

either remain inert or take to non-violent action in case of an invasion, and that if guerilla warfare were practised on any large scale it would certainly lead to disastrous consequences for the people. He had a message for Congressmen, at this time of suspense in nationalist politics: 'I hope that the forthcoming AICC will revert to the non-violent method and give the clearest possible instructions about non-violent non-cooperation. To aid the British effort in the violent way without any official connection and after the failure of the recent negotiations appears to me to court national disgrace.' The mahatma knew, as few others had known, his former 'conscience-keeper', Rajaji, and also one whom he recently declared to be virtually his heir, Jawaharlal. 'Neither goes to violence for his belief in it. They do so because they think probably that India must have a course of violence before coming to non-violence.' Gandhiji had his own style, and a mahatma's way, of administering a rebuke chastened with sympathetic understanding of the other man's position and line of action.

Besides the 'apostasies' of Rajagopalachari and Pandit Nehru in their respective ways, a third factor distracted the mind of Congressmen from the Gandhian ways in the spring of 1942. It was the voice of a former Congress president, Subhas Chandra Bose, who had abjured non-violence as a policy in fighting for Indian independence. Having escaped mysteriously from his Calcutta house, in spite of strict police surveillance, in January 1941, the Forward Bloc leader appeared in Berlin in April 1941. There he organized a Free India Centre in November 1941, and an Indian Legion in January 1942; in the following months, to the great delight of violence-minded patriots, an Azad Hind Radio, operating from Germany, asserted in vigorous Hindustani that the British Empire in India would not survive this war, and that though he had accepted the offer of friendly armed aid from Germany for a war of *azadi* (freedom), Subhas Chandra Bose would never agree to anything humiliating to the Indian people.

After the capitulation of the British army in Malaya, thousands of Indian soldiers were freed by the Japanese to join an Indian National Army formed by Mohan Singh under the patronage of Japan. In March 1942, Tokyo announced that the Tokyo-based Indian Independence Conference, under the leadership of a venerable Indian revolutionary, Rash Behari Bose, had invited Subhas Chandra Bose to be the leader in a war of liberation. Japan disclaimed imperial ambitions in the holy land of the Buddha. There was widespread grief in the country when, on 29 March 1942, newspapers carried a Reuter report from London dated 28 March that, according to the Lyons radio, quoting a Tokyo message, Subhas Chandra Bose had been killed in an air crash off the coast of Japan. On 30 March, Reuter said that the news of the death of Subhas Bose should

be regarded with suspicion. On 31 March, the newspaper said that Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad had sent the following telegram to Subhas's mother at Calcutta: 'Thank God what purported to be authentic has proved to be wrong. We congratulate you and the nation.'⁸⁴

In the eyes of millions of Indians, Subhas appeared in 1942 as a possible liberator, symbolizing in himself the tradition of the armed revolutionaries in and out of the British jails. When asked by the press at Delhi on 12 April to indicate what should Indian reaction be if Subhas Bose were to come to India with an army to fight the British, Jawaharlal declared that he did not doubt the *bona fides* of Subhas, but it was a bad thing psychologically for the Indian masses to think in terms of being liberated by an outside agency. Jawaharlal indicated that he would not go to America to seek American support for Indian independence. 'A suggestion was made to me by Colonel Johnson that he would be glad if I could go to America on a brief visit. But I decided not to go at a time of national peril like the present one.'⁸⁵ In this month, April 1942, it was announced officially in India that American forces had arrived in the country. Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* on 26 April: 'We know what American aid means. It amounts in the end to American influence, if not American rule, added to the British. It is a tremendous price to pay for the possible success of Allied arms.'

About one hundred and fifty members and one thousand visitors were present when on the evening of 29 April the AICC met at Allahabad. They received with cheers the president's declaration that, in rejecting the War Cabinet's Draft Declaration, the Working Committee was unanimous. There were cheers again when the president said: 'Our stand is firm and I repeat it. It is this. Only a free India can defend herself.' Maulana Azad sounded a note of warning against people who were thinking of changing India's masters. 'I warn you especially against what I have termed "silent welcome" to aggressors.' In explaining to the AICC the Cripps Mission negotiations, Asaf Ali said that the British Government's proposals appeared to be insincere in the matter of transferring power to the Indian people, and that the Cripps mission affair was intended for propaganda purposes in England and America. The resolution on the War Cabinet proposals was approved by the AICC with only one member dissenting. Jawaharlal then moved three resolutions, which had been passed by the Working Committee in its meeting at Allahabad on 28 April and attracted the government's attention immediately. The first paragraph of the Working Committee's resolution on evacuation orders suggested that no such orders should be passed except in cases of sudden and extreme urgency, without making suitable arrangements and without giving reasons and sufficient time to the people concerned to make other arrangements and, in any event, without every facility of transport and adequate compensation. The second

paragraph, publication of which in newspaper was banned under a Gazette Extraordinary issued on 28 April, said that the civil authority was powerless and the military authority disinclined to intervene in frequent cases of molestation of women by soldiers in railway trains and in other places like evacuated areas. The second resolution, publication of which was entirely banned, said that recently, in Lower Burma and notably in Rangoon, it had happened that 'though actual military operations were still some distance away, the whole civil administration suddenly collapsed and those in charge of it sought their own safety and abandoned their posts just when their presence was most needed.' The same type of officials wielded authority in India, and recently in Madras there was an astonishing exhibition of official panic and incompetence. 'Recent orders passed and circulars issued on behalf of various Provincial Governments indicate that they are obsessed with making provision for the safety of higher civil officials and their removal from places of immediate danger.' Hence, it had become the especial duty of the people to rely upon themselves and organize in times of emergency self-protection and self-sufficiency measures as recommended by the Congress resolutions made at Bardoli. The third Resolution, which the press were allowed to publish in full, said that, in making arrangements for evacuation and care of Indian refugees from Malaya and Burma, officials had shown utter incompetence, callousness and racial discrimination at every step. The Congress called upon the government to arrange for the speedy evacuation of all Indians from the unoccupied zone in Burma, to appoint suitable Indians as evacuation supervisors, and to permit non-official relief agencies to send social workers and doctors all along the Manipur route from Dimapur to Tamu and beyond to base camps in Burma and to Mytkinya, the air base for transporting refugees from Burma to India. The Congress urged the government to make every effort to find suitable work for the evacuees and refugees from Malaya and Burma.⁸⁴

The resolution on the lessons of Rangoon and Lower Burma was passed by the AICC on 29 April; and the resolution on evacuation orders and the resolution on evacuees and refugees from Malaya and Burma were endorsed on 30 April. Unexpectedly, it was announced on 30 April that the AICC session would be prolonged. It was known that Mahatma Gandhi had sent from Wardha for the consideration of the Working Committee certain plans for non-violent resistance to aggressors, and that these were being examined. The Working Committee were deliberating on a draft resolution indicating precisely what people were expected to do in case of aggression by Japan. 'It seems', said the *Leader* of Allahabad, 'that the draft resolution sponsored by the Nehru group is not acceptable to the "Gandhites" who are pressing for a draft on the lines suggested by Mahatma Gandhi, and there is the danger of further

resignations if the committee adopts a resolution encouraging violence in any way.⁸⁵

That there was truth in such reports current at Allahabad during the AICC session was confirmed and became widely known several months later when the Government of India released to the press on 4 August 1942, an AICC Office Note on discussions in the Working Committee at Allahabad from 27 April to 1 May 1942. This AICC Office Note was seized by the police after their search of the AICC Office at Swaraj Bhawan in Allahabad on 26 May 1942. Along with this note, the Government of India released to the press on 4 August 1942 the Working Committee's Draft No. 1 dated Allahabad 27 April 1942, which was drafted by Mahatma Gandhi and sent from Wardha to Allahabad through Mira Ben, a special messenger, Gandhiji's famed English disciple in constructive work for India's poor millions. This Draft came into the possession of the government early in May 1942. It was found enclosed in an intercepted letter sent by post by Sadiq Ali (Office Secretary, AICC) to Rajendra Prasad, who wanted it.

Gandhiji did not consider his draft a finished product, and he had asked Mira Ben to explain to the Working Committee his views and feelings. Gandhiji's Draft No. 1 was softened in Draft No. 2 prepared by Rajendra Prasad. After four days of discussion in the Working Committee, Jawaharlal prepared Draft No. 3 dated 1 May 1942, and a modified Draft No. 4 dated 1 May 1942. In the morning session of the Committee on 1 May, the president put Draft No. 2 and Draft No. 4 to vote. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Kripalani, Shankarrao Deo, Sarojini Naidu, and Profulla Chandra Ghosh, from among the members, and Jairamdas Daulatram, Narendra Deva, Achyut Patwardhan, Bardoloi and Bishwanath Das from among the invitees, voted for Gandhiji's draft, modified by Rajendra Prasad (Draft No. 2). Those who voted for Jawaharlal's modified draft (Draft No. 4), were Jawaharlal, Govind Ballabh Pant, Bhulabhai Desai, and Asaf Ali from among the members, and Satyamurti and Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit from among the invitees. Rajendra Prasad's draft was thus passed by the Working Committee in the morning sitting of 1 May, but in the afternoon sitting of 1 May the president reopened the subject. The AICC Office Secretary noted: 'He [the President] pleaded with those who supported Rajendra Babu's draft to accept Jawaharlalji's draft and make it a unanimous resolution. It was the president's opinion that there was practically no difference between the two drafts though the protagonists of both the drafts held that a vital difference in approach persisted. Supporters of Rajendra Babu's draft yielded to the wish of the president and accepted Jawaharlalji's draft (No. 4).'

The most important single development in Congress history between

the rejection of the Cripps mission proposals and the Quit India Resolution was Mahatma Gandhi's 'inner voice' prompting him from some time in April 1942 that he should prepare himself and the Congress and the Indian people for a big satyagraha movement for freedom.

The first indication in a document of the possibility of a Quit India Movement appeared in the margin of Gandhiji's draft No. 1 for the Working Committee meeting at Allahabad. The following was written but was crossed out: 'The A.I.C.C. therefore requests Mahatma Gandhi to guide the Congress organisation in carrying out the programme of non-violent non-cooperation when and where it becomes necessary.' Gandhiji's programme of organized civil resistance was designed, at this stage, primarily to meet an emergency: an invasion of India by Japan. In explaining the principle of 'non-violent non-cooperation', Gandhiji's draft said: '1. We may not bend the knee to the aggressor or obey any of his orders. 2. We may not look to him for any favours nor fall to his bribes. But we may not bear him any malice nor wish him ill. 3. If he wishes to take possession of our fields we will refuse to give them up even if we have to die in the effort to resist him. 4. If he is attacked by disease or is dying of thirst and seeks our aid we may not refuse it. 5. In such places where the British and Japanese forces are fighting our non-cooperation will be fruitless and unnecessary.' 'These instructions or operative parts of Gandhiji's draft appeared with little change in Rajendra Prasad's draft (Draft No. 2); they appeared in essential substance in Draft No. 4, which became the AICC 'War Resolution', passed on 1 May 1942. Jawaharlal's Draft No. 3 provided no concrete instructions regarding non-violent non-cooperation which was, however, accepted in principle. Gandhiji's draft provided for a straightforward statement that the AICC was of opinion 'that the British should withdraw from India'. Rajendra Prasad's draft did not say so, but maintained Gandhiji's world-perspective: 'the Committee appeals to Britain, for the sake of her own safety, for the sake of India's safety and for the cause of world peace, to let go her hold on India even if she does not give up all Asiatic and African possessions'. Draft No. 3 did not include any reference to all of Great Britain's 'Asiatic and African possessions', in demanding that Britain must abandon her hold on India. Drafts Nos. 3 and 4 gave attenuated versions of the points found in Gandhiji's draft that the Cripps mission proposals had 'shown up British imperialism in its nakedness as never before'; that Britain was incapable of defending India and unwilling to entrust Indians with power of national defence as free men; that India only desired freedom from all alien domination, and she bore 'no enmity either towards Japan or towards any other nation'; and that in this fight for national freedom, while welcoming universal sympathy, India did not stand in need of foreign military aid, for 'India will attain her freedom through her non-violent strength and will retain

it likewise.' Both Gandhiji's draft and Rajendra Prasad's version of Gandhiji's draft favoured a ringing declaration condemning Great Britain's 'scorched earth' policy in the Asian war, maintaining that 'it can never be the Congress policy to destroy what belongs to or is of use to the masses'. Drafts Nos. 3 and 4 remained silent on this subject of great concern in 1942 for the masses in Assam, Bengal, Orissa, Madras and to some extent in Bihar also, for it was generally believed that, if obliged to retreat from coastal Bengal, the British Government would destroy the industrial complexes in Bengal and Bihar and the sealed grain stock guarded by the military according to their 'denial policy' towards invaders. Jawaharlal's drafts remained silent on another point of great popular interest in the spring of 1942 which Gandhiji's draft expressed clearly: 'it is harmful to India's interests and dangerous to the cause of India's freedom to introduce foreign soldiers in India'. Rajendra Prasad's draft, too, did not comment on the presence of foreign soldiers in the country. Rajendra Prasad maintained at length the fresh emphasis put by Gandhiji on the Constructive Programme: 'If crores of people do not take a living interest in this national building work, freedom must remain a dream and unattainable by either non-violence or violence.'

The AICC Office Note, most probably prepared by Sadiq Ali, the AICC Office Secretary, recorded a summary of comments made by members of the Working Committee and the special invitees in the course of the committee's five-day deliberations in drawing up the AICC 'War Resolution' adopted on 1 May 1942. It is a document which did not have the benefit of subsequent correction or approval by the Working Committee; it was not the committee's official practice to keep such notes on the proceedings. The office secretary obviously prepared this unauthorized note for his record, but the document has throughout a ring of the author's *bona fides*. It would not have been uncharacteristic of the several leaders to have said what, according to this office note, they had said in substance. Gandhi had no doubt in his mind that 'the immorality that British imperialism is' needed no support and India should defend herself to the best of her ability with the best available weapon she had: non-violent non-cooperation with patriotic zeal, equally against the old aggressor who was unwilling to vacate and the ambitious prospective aggressor seeking to displace Great Britain in Asia. Jawaharlal strongly disagreed with the mahatma's way of sweeping aside, as rather unimportant in India's case, the case of a country in political servitude, considerations of Congress foreign policy beyond the simple assertion of freedom for all peoples from bondage, oppression and discrimination. Jawaharlal observed: 'If Bapu's approach is accepted we become passive partners of the Axis powers. This approach is contrary to the Congress policy for the last two years and a half.' Jawaharlal had the same opinion about Rajendra Babu's draft, but conceded that in

it the portion about resistance to Japanese aggression had some substance. Rajaji thought the new interpretation of Congress foreign policy, the suggestion of non-alignment in the Big Power scramble for empire, would go terribly against the Congress at this juncture, and 'Japan will say "excellent"'. Bhulabhai, reputedly the finest legal brain in the Working Committee, advised the committee: 'No [new] resolution is called for.' Govind Ballabh Pant stated: 'My attitude today is: we must do our utmost to defend the country and swallow many things. If I can't co-operate with the British it is because it is not consistent with our dignity. But the approach in the draft makes every soldier I see my enemy.' Asaf Ali observed that Gandhiji's draft asked the Congress to accept non-violence for all time. Satyamurti did not agree with Gandhiji's objection to the entry of foreign soldiers; he thought Congress should make an approach to the Muslim League. Jairamdas thought that the attempt made in Gandhiji's draft to create 'an atmosphere of neutrality' was worth making. Sarojini Naidu said that the appeal to Britain to withdraw was a rhetorical gesture: 'It is however good as an expression of our extreme disgust and dislike and hatred of the British Government.' Bishwanath Das, the ex-premier of Orissa, told the Committee that if accepted the Cripps proposals would have kept India 'in permanent bondage', and that under the circumstances it was very proper for the Congress to appeal to Britain to withdraw from the country. 'They have brought in troops from Dominions and other foreign nations. This is highly objectionable and dangerous.' Bardoloi of Assam submitted: 'We are already in the danger zone. This is no time for ideological discussions. Let us concentrate on the present action which cannot be anything else than non-violent non-cooperation.' Acharya Narendra Deva felt that whatever unreality there was in Indian politics was due to the British rule, and that Congress could well tell the British Government to leave India. Narendra Deva was more interested in the war-aims and peace-aims of the Great Powers than in defeating Hitlerite Germany. 'Our position has not been that we want power because without it we cannot kindle the national spirit; our position has been that if the war was a people's war and there was proof of it in action we are willing to throw in our weight on the side of democracies.' He did not agree with the view that the Second World War was one and indivisible, or that the aims of Russia and China were identical with those of Britain and America. Pattabhi Sitaramayya said that Gandhiji's draft modified by Rajendra Prasad was a comprehensive and appropriate draft. He observed:

A time has come when we must realise ourselves. After the rejection of Cripps proposals we must reconsider our attitude and restate our position. We have varied our position from time to time during the time the war has

been on. Poona was a variation from the old position. Bombay was variation from Poona. Bombay was followed by C.D. and C.D. by Cripps.

Achyut Patwardhan was distressed by Jawaharlalji's expressions of sympathy for the Anglo-American cause: 'If we do not take decisions Jawaharlalji's attitude will lead to abject and unconditional co-operation with British machinery which must collapse.' Regarding criticism of non-violence, Patwardhan informed the Committee that: 'It was put to Gandhiji. He said that the Congress can take the stand that under existing circumstances non-violence was the best policy.' Acharya Kripalani supported Gandhiji's draft calling for British withdrawal from India and asking other powers to keep out of Indian frontiers: 'If they do not we fight.' Rajendra Prasad argued that, unless the Committee adopted Bapu's draft, the Congress could not produce 'the proper atmosphere'. 'The Government has closed the door on armed resistance. We have only unarmed resistance to offer. We have therefore to strengthen Bapu's hands.' Vallabhbhai Patel observed:

I see that there are two distinct opinions in the Committee. We have ever since the outbreak of War tried to pull together. But it may not be possible on this occasion. Gandhiji has taken a definite stand. If his background is unsuitable to some members of the Committee there is the other background which is unsuitable to us.

Gandhiji's draft was a perfect reply to the Cripps mission, said Vallabhbhai. 'Cripps is a clever fellow. He has gone about saying that his mission has not been a failure.' Vallabhbhai was not in favour of making a fresh approach to Jinnah: 'We have made repeated attempts and courted many insults. The Congress today is reeling under two blows, one of Cripps' and the other Rajaji's resolutions have done us enormous harm.' As to future action, Vallabhbhai announced: 'I have placed myself in the hands of Gandhiji. I feel that he is instinctively right, the lead he gives in all critical situations.' Regarding the Congress approach to the War, he deplored the changing inclinations shown by the Working Committee:

In Bombay, at the time of the A.I.C.C. meeting, there was a difference in approach but the door to negotiation was closed. In Bardoli it was made clear that the door was still open and our sympathies were with the Allies. It is time the door is finally closed after the repeated insults heaped upon us. I agree with the draft before us. If there is any pro-fascist hint in the draft let it be removed.

Maulana Azad said that the discussion on the drafts had been useful, 'But it is not clear to me, the differences that divide the two groups.' He

thought Cripps was a great hope, but Cripps proved a great disappointment. 'Cripps in his statements after the failure of negotiations has emphasized two points: (i) his mission has proved the sincerity of the intentions of the British Government towards India, (ii) the anti-Japanese front is the outcome of his mission.' This was false propaganda. 'Great Britain has made it impossible for us to defend our country.' The president told his committee:

It is my firm belief that nationalism is the only religion for a subject nation. If I feel that Japan was better than Britain and her invasion was for the good of India I would have said so in public. But it is not so. Gandhiji's prescription is the only alternative though I doubt its effectiveness.

As in 1940, Maulana Azad's great tact, and his faith in himself and in his committee of dedicated veterans, enabled him to prevent, in the spring of 1942, an open and serious split in the Working Committee.⁸⁶

The War Resolution of 1 May 1942 calling for complete non-violent non-cooperation with invading forces was adopted by the AICC with only four members voting against it, in a house of about 180 members present. On the closing day of the session, 2 May, there was a four-hour debate on the Madras Resolutions. Rajaji explained, with his usual ludicity, his stand: 'My proposition is to tell the Mussalmans: 'We are not going to coerce you.' If it was made clear that Muslims were entitled to self-determination and to the form of government they wanted in predominantly Muslim areas, there was a basis for approach.' Rajaji reminded the AICC that the Delhi Resolution of 2 April 1942 had said that, though wedded to Indian freedom and unity, the Congress Working Committee 'cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will.' Jawaharlal cried No to Rajaji's assertion that the difficulty had been to dislodge the Muslim League from its position of control and influence with large masses of Muslims. At this, Rajaji challenged Jawaharlal to produce results — a settlement of the communal problem. He was convinced that Congress should ask the League to meet, for Congress could not afford to have a divided people in the country. The ghost of Pakistan was not going to kill the Congress. 'Friends of the Punjab,' Rajaji declared, 'Pakistan is only a ghost and I want to hold it by the beard and face it' (Laughter). In seconding the Madras Resolutions, K. Santhanam asserted: 'You give it to them and they will realize it is dead sea fruit and will not help the Mussalmans. If you deny it you deny them the process of education and the prospect of unity.' Jagat Narain Lal moved a resolution opposing any proposal to disintegrate India; he thought it surprising that even after the Cripps mission Rajaji indulged in the delusion of a national government.

T. Prakasam supported Jagat Narain Lal's resolution, and asserted that Rajaji's proposition did not represent the opinion of the Madras Presidency, and that the Madras resolutions were passed at a meeting for which there was no proper notice and no agenda circulated previously among members. Rajendra Prasad opposed Rajaji's resolutions and reminded the AICC: 'I had asked Mr Jinnah [in 1939] to clarify what the Muslim League wanted and to give us the details of their demand. Mr Jinnah had given a lengthy reply but had not clarified anything. Pakistan had not been given the shape of a scheme or plan. India is one and had been one since the ancient times.' Jawaharlal expressed a suspicion similar to that of Rajendra Prasad, and observed that the whole aim of Rajaji's Madras resolutions was that some kind of provisional administration should be set up. Jawaharlal wanted the British Government to assist him in opposing the idea of Pakistan.

The Muslim League does not represent a great majority of the Indian Muslims but it does represent a section of them and I have tried my level best to win that body over, but what is the use of doing anything to ally myself with the people who are always putting forward petty demands. I stand on the platform of Indian independence.

Speaking for the moment as a Muslim and not as a Congressman, Maulana Nuruddin Behari, expressed his conviction that Pakistan was 'a retrograde step which would go against Hindus and Muslims and the generations to come.' Yusuf Meherally was cheered when he characterized Rajaji's eloquence as 'panic-stricken' and the Madras resolutions as 'a tragedy of intellect'. 'The whole thing [the Pakistan slogan] is politically retrograde, economically unsound and culturally ridiculous. The great point about it is that the Muslim League which has raised the slogan has been wise enough to keep it as a slogan and not make a scheme.'

In replying to the debate, Rajaji made another brilliant speech in prophetic vein: 'This was a time and an opportunity which we could not get again for a hundred years. Did Shivaji wait till a perfect government was at his command? We must take authority such as it was and work it and make it serve our purpose. You have proved your case against the British to the hilt but what purpose does it serve?' The Congress must set about undoing what the British Government had done to produce a particular situation. If it were true, as Pandit Nehru had declared, that the Muslim League stood in opposition to the independence programme, should the Congress not deal with the question. Rajaji pleaded with the house not to accept Jagat Narain Lal's counter resolution. The house might throw out the Madras resolutions, but let it not pass the other resolution which was a most dangerous proposition for it would tie the

Congress up for ever against the Muslim League, said Rajaji. The president had said, in opening the debate, that Rajaji 'should not have sprung a surprise on us [the CWC] but should have waited till he could have placed his point of view before the committee first,' and that Jagat Narain Lal would be allowed as a special case to move his non-official resolution after Rajaji had moved his Madras resolutions. Rajaji's resolutions were rejected by the house by 120 votes to 15; and Jagat Narain Lal's resolution was passed by 92 votes to 17. In his concluding remarks, Maulana Azad declared in the AICC: 'Pakistan is against the spirit of Islam.' He had always held that the attempt to reach an agreement with the Muslim League would be worth making even if it did not achieve success, but Rajaji's procedure in this respect was wrong. The president was willing to reopen negotiations with the Muslim League: 'Even now, I am prepared to call the Working Committee and ask them to nominate five representatives to meet five representatives of the Muslim League in order to come to a settlement.'⁸⁷

Having severed his official connection with the Congress Working Committee on 30 April 1942, Rajaji was free to campaign for his propositions, but he was no longer the force he had been in the Congress for about two decades. Neither the British Government, nor the Muslim League helped him to regain, in 1942 or after, even a part of his former prestige and influence in the Congress or in the country. In May 1942, Linlithgow did nothing to elevate the position of Rajagopalachari, who along with Jawaharlal (Cripps's friend) and Maulana Azad, had gone far and risked much in the Cripps mission negotiations.⁸⁸

Though a reduced force in party politics, Rajaji never lost the personal respect and affection of Congress leaders. In the eyes of numerous people who felt strongly against the suggestion of vivisection of India, Rajaji's *bona fides* remained rather clouded and his Madras resolutions were viewed by unkind critics as a sort of stab in the back of the Congress. On his part, Rajaji believed that it was his duty as a Congressman wedded to the ideal of freedom of opinion to assert in public his conviction that Congress should not delay, in view of the war situation, in setting up a popular government under the existing constitution in the provinces and a government representative of various sections of public opinion at the Centre. At a press conference at New Delhi on 4 May, Rajaji said that the tension in Madras Province was intolerable on account of the Japanese threat of invasion and raids and on account of defence measures taken by the government, and that it was quite possible that the same situation might arise in Bombay and had already arisen in Bengal, Assam and Orissa. He asserted that a popular Government, to keep up the morale of the people and to save them from unnecessary suffering, could be set up in Madras without prejudice to the general policy of the Congress. 'It is not only not wrong but a brave thing to take

office in 1937 and hold it till 1939. We should take office now when we have to face difficulty and danger.' Congress could make a revolutionary change in the morale of the people, to begin with in Madras, which might be cut off any moment from the rest of India if the Japanese took a portion of South India. War conditions had provided a revolutionary occasion which nationalists should not miss. 'We must have a focus of authority for a revolution in our country. All this is not anti-British. It is anti-slavery.' Rajaji deplored Sir Stafford Cripps' statement in a recent broadcast that the Congress wanted the British Government to hand over complete power to India's majority community. 'We never wanted this and what we wanted never amounted to this.' Regarding the breakdown of negotiations, Rajaji said: 'I never could understand why Cripps was in such a hurry to go back and why he broke away the negotiations so mysteriously. I could not guess the cause but I could not blame the Congress for it.' Referring to Amery's observation that the Cripps mission was responsible for the Madras resolutions, Rajaji said that these resolutions were the result of the breakdown of the negotiations and not of the visit itself. It was wrong and unfair for people to suggest that Rajaji had talks with British officials at New Delhi and elsewhere and these led to the Madras resolutions. He was grieved but he had no plans in his head when he left New Delhi after the failure of the Cripps mission. 'I met the Governor of Madras on April 18. He called me on the phone to meet him and discuss things in connection with the Madras panic. It was purely about Madras and I criticized his policy of scattering his Government offices all over the presidency and suggested the bringing of the Government to one place either at Madras or at any other town.'⁸⁹

In his public speeches in May and in the following months, Rajaji maintained that he would not do anything to injure the true interests of the Congress, but he wanted his proposals examined. In a public meeting in Ramnad on 22 May, Rajaji said that he was almost certain that the Japanese would give up their aggressive intentions against India, and the British would no longer be able to rule over India, if unity was achieved between Hindus and Muslims through Congress-League understanding. Rajaji often suggested in his speeches that Gandhiji too had similar views regarding the Hindu-Muslim question.⁹⁰

6. Preparations for a Struggle

From early May, Gandhiji started in earnest preparing public opinion in favour of a big satyagraha movement. The AICC War Resolution, though not exactly to his liking, left him scope for stepping up his campaign for mass non-violent non-cooperation against possible Japanese invaders and simultaneously for a movement demanding the orderly withdrawal of British power from the country without further

delay. In answer to a question by a correspondent whether, by asking the British to withdraw, he was not inviting the Japanese to invade his country, Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 3 May that he felt convinced that the British presence in India was the incentive for a Japanese invasion. The Japanese would be bound to reconsider their plans if the British would wisely decide to withdraw and leave India to manage her own affairs. The very novelty of such a stroke of policy would confound the Japanese, dissolve their hatred against the British in India, and produce a suitable atmosphere for ending the unnatural state of things that choked Indian life. In another article in the same issue of the *Harijan*, Gandhi said that crores of rupees had already been drained from India for warding off the threatened invasion; on the top of it, the country was threatened with the British scorched-earth policy. He protested against recent government orders depriving thousands of people in Feni (in East Bengal) of homesteads, crops and boats, in the name of preparation for war against the enemy of Britain. As an out and out resister, it was his duty to ask people to resist, non-violently of course, against orders depriving them of their houses and boats without which life was impossible in East Bengal. On 10 May, the *Harijan* carried an article by Gandhi saying: 'Every act of the British Government is being interpreted, and I think rightly, as being in its own interest and for its own safety. There is no such thing as joint common interest.' Nationalist India was ill-equipped for armed resistance in collaboration with the British against aggressors, even if it could be made enthusiastic about it. 'And what is there to enthuse nationalist India?' The supreme act of British withdrawal from India should precede, not follow, British victory. On 16 May, at Bombay, Mahatma Gandhi gave a long interview to the press, in which, besides explaining controversial points in his recent statements, he made a sensational observation:

I used to say that my moral support was entirely with Britain. I am very sorry to have to confess today that my mind refuses to give my moral support to Great Britain, because the British behaviour towards India has filled me with great pain. I was not quite prepared for Mr Amery's performances or the Cripps mission. These revelations in my estimation have made Britain morally wrong. Therefore, though I do not wish any humiliation and defeat for Britain, my mind refuses to give her moral support.

Until the canker of White superiority was destroyed in its entirety, and unless they put their own houses in order by making it their fixed determination to withdraw their influence and power from Asia and Africa, both America and Britain would lack the moral basis for engaging in this war, Gandhi said. He again referred to his demand for the withdrawal of the British from India: 'It is the most logical thing I have done and it is in the interests of all. It is entirely a friendly act. I am

moving cautiously, not thoughtlessly, but there is a fixed determination behind it.' He was convinced, he declared, that people in India were living in a state of 'ordered anarchy', not under a rule that promoted the welfare of the Indian people. If, as a result of the withdrawal of this 'ordered anarchy', there was complete anarchy, Gandhi would risk it. He would like to believe that years of continuous effort at educating India along the lines of non-violence had not gone in vain and that people would evolve 'real popular order out of the chaos.'⁹¹ The *Harijan* of 17 May carried Gandhi's appeal 'To every Briton', to support his demand for British withdrawal from every Asiatic and African possession and at least from India, which she held by right of conquest and through an army of occupation. 'How does India profit by enforced participation in Britain's war?' The falsity that enveloped Indian life was suffocating; almost every Indian was discontented. 'When slavery was abolished in America many slaves protested; but abolition was result of bloody civil war so, though the negro's lot is considerably better, he remains outcast of high society. I am asking for something much higher, a bloodless end of an unnatural domination and a new era, despite protests from some of us.' That his quarrel was with the British Government, not with the British people, Gandhi explained in the *Harijan* of 24 May: 'I have hundreds of British friends. Andrews' friendship was enough to tie me to British people. But we were fixed in determination that British Rule in any shape or form must end.' To whom should the British rulers hand over India? Gandhi's answer was now: 'Leave India to God. If that is too much, then leave her to anarchy.' In the same issue of the *Harijan*, Gandhi declared: 'Independence sheds all fear — fear of the Japanese, of anarchy, and of the wrath of the British lion.'

Rajaji had been quoting Gandhi's words about the importance of communal unity for independence. Referring to this, Gandhi wrote: 'Though he has quoted me in his support I see the same difference between him and me that there is between chalk and cheese.' Rajaji would yield the right of secession to the Muslims to buy unity in the hope of keeping away the Japanese; Gandhi would not be a party to the vivisection of India. Any understanding among the conflicting elements and interests would be like a house built on sand, if these elements would not make a combined effort to rid India of foreign domination. Real unity was not possible in the country until the British withdrew their rule. Rajaji's political insight was impaired, Gandhiji suggested, by fear of the Japanese occupation of India. So long as the British rule remained, both Hindus and Muslims, indeed all disgruntled elements, would look to the British for support and get it. After considering all aspects of the Indian situation, he had evolved his formula of inviting the British to agree to an orderly and voluntary withdrawal of their rule over India.

Those in close touch with Sevagram were saying by the middle of May that Mahatma Gandhi, after weeks of deep contemplation regarding the future of the country, was preparing for a big move, which could blast Rajagopalachari's move and at the same time place India on the high road to swaraj. It was reported in the press that recently, like other prominent Congressmen, Rajaji had met Gandhiji, and that the Mahatma, though not favouring Rajaji's move, did not insist on Rajaji's giving it up.⁹² The working of the Mahatma's mind in the middle of May 1942 is best reflected in an account of his 85-minute interview to Bombay Suburban and Gujarat Congressmen on 15 May, contained in a letter dated 17 May from Sharaf Athar Ali, a Communist worker in Bombay, to P.C. Joshi, a Communist leader in New Delhi. This letter, intercepted by the police, said that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Bhulabhai, Kher, Morarji and prominent Congressmen were present at this interview. In reply to a question about his reported intention to advise the British to leave India, Mahatma Gandhi said:

I tell them to go away. And why do I say so? Because they will have to go anyway. They have been suffering defeats right from Singapore, through Burma and now even at the gates of India. Their continuation will therefore mean suffering for India. Yes, I ask them to go. And if they will not? Then I shall have to see. If my advice is not heeded by them, I shall have to force them to go, by non-cooperation or by civil disobedience. Or it may be by both.

He would cause them embarrassment, if they would not listen to his advice. 'And I do not think it can be individual satyagraha this time. No, it will be mass satyagraha — an all-out satyagraha against the British demanding their withdrawal forthwith. Mind, I am not pro-Japanese. Indeed Japan is too much of an aggressor for me to be that.' The British were the immediate aggressors, and they were no better than the Japanese. 'Names do not matter.' British statesmen were unwilling to give power to the Indians. 'Yes, Cripps has gone back. But why do they not negotiate again? Through Sapru and Jayakar or even Rajaji?' Rajaji still hoped to achieve that which the British Government had determined would not be achieved: Hindu-Muslim unity. 'Rajaji concedes Pakistan. But has Jinnah even moved an inch to discuss matters with him? No. For Jinnah's game is to bring Government pressure on the Congress and Congress pressure on the Government, or both.' He could not swallow the splitting of India; he alone knew what pain the thought had caused him. What really was Pakistan? When someone in the audience said it was the demand of the Muslim masses, Gandhi said: 'Yes, yes, who denies that? but what is the demand? The masses are duped. Good Mussulmans have failed to explain it to me.' Rajaji talked of the Lahore Resolution, but that Resolution was out of consideration.

'For where is Independence?' Better face anarchy than suffer the present state of the country. 'The Congress mind is neither Hindu nor Muslim nor Christian nor Parsee. It is this Congress mind — a live reality — that will have to take charge — of the anarchy.' Anarchy was the only way, whether this anarchy was given by the British withdrawal or created by the Congress by launching satyagraha.

I know the general confusion. You find Maulana says one thing, Jawahar another, Rajaji a third and now I a fourth thing. What are we to do? My advice to you is to weigh all the four and decide which to accept for yourself. I have not yet met Jawahar nor Maulana. But as you know well, although Jawahar and myself have differed quite often, he has always been with me as far as action goes. And I hope to win him to me. As for Maulana, we have always stood together since years. So I hope to reduce the four different notes to two. Then there will be only my voice and the voice of Rajaji and you can decide which of the two to follow. I cannot say. But I can only say that in this decision do not be influenced by a Bhulabhai here or a Kher Sahib there. Decide for yourself. But decide with your reason, for if you just come my way then you will become an obstacle to me. And as for yourself, you will find yourself no more.

In this interview of 15 May, in replying to B.G. Kher's question on whether a mass civil disobedience movement would not mean direct help to the Japanese, Mahatma Gandhi was reported to have said:

Oh, no! We are driving out the British. We do not invite the Japanese. No, I disagree with those who think them liberators. In fact I believe that Subhas Bose will have to be resisted by us. I have no proof, but I have an idea that the Forward Bloc has a tremendous organization in India. Well Subhas has risked much for us; but if he means to set up a Government in India under the Japanese, he will be resisted by us. And I fear the Forward Bloc people will try their utmost to do so. And again as I said, we launch our movement only against the British. The Japs can expect us to sign a neutrality pact with them. And why not? Why should they invade us? But if they do we shall resist.'

He could not help the Japanese. 'Having earned my freedom I remain neutral. But that is for a non-violent man like me. The ethics of the violent, as many of you are, are different. Indeed, Russia, erstwhile hater of Britain, can take her aid, and Britain, similar hater, give it to her because both have violence preferring mind.' The violence-minded could choose their own way, to be true to themselves, in the matter of attitude towards Japan.

In reply to a question by Hutheesing, seeking his opinion on people who, like the Communists, said that India should stand by the inter-

national forces of freedom and fight Japan as China was doing, Gandhiji observed:

None could be greater fools. (Loud Laughter). But where is this India? India as India does not exist. It is in Britain's pocket. How can such India help? And why? The British give us nothing while they demand everything. And after all what help are we not giving? I do not devour the newspapers like you but I have got the information that 150,000 recruits are recruited monthly out of which 50,000 are selected. That's not a small matter. Besides Britain gets financial help. Who is going to resist its taxes. The postcard has risen from six pies. But even if it rises to a rupee, am I going to stop writing letters.⁹³

According to Intelligence reports received by the government by the end of May, Mahatma Gandhi was prepared to take full responsibility for his proposed movement himself, if necessary; but he wished to carry the Congress and the public at large with him, if possible. He had deputed Khurshed Ben Naoroji, Mira Ben and Rammanohar Lohia to carry out propaganda on his behalf in Bengal and Orissa; in Bombay, Mridula Ben Sarabhai was engaged in similar work.⁹⁴ Recently, Mira Ben had seen the Chief Secretary of Orissa and sought information from him on government measures regarding 'rounding up boats, bicycles and conveyances; voluntary defence organizations; evacuation of villagers from the neighbourhood of aerodromes and the need in that event to provide them with land elsewhere.' She told the Chief Secretary that she proposed to stay indefinitely in Orissa, the province being in the zone of operation allotted to her. Bishwanath Das, the ex-premier, had recently made an angry speech, but in public Congress speakers had been keeping more or less to a moderate line and were occasionally helpful to government. Intelligence reports, however, continued to alarm the authorities:

The most circumstantial report we have so far received indicates that the plan at present is to organise collective civil disobedience in zones immediately threatened by the Japanese, which have been declared emergency areas. There will be two phases: in the first resistance to demands for the delivery of property, both movable and immovable, and to evacuation orders is to be organised and, when the first phase has gained sufficient momentum, the second phase will consist of organising the return of evacuated families and attempts on their part to take possession of their houses, lands, boats, conveyances and sealed stocks of grain etc.

Other reports indicated that the new movement would take the form of organized resistance to the 'scorched earth' policy. Abul Kalam Azad was reported to have told Bengal Congressmen that the new programme might be changed, amended or developed according to the changes in the war situation.⁹⁵

In a press statement made in Calcutta on 8 May, Azad had challenged the Government to let him know what parts of the banned Congress resolutions were based on unverified rumours or misrepresented facts, and give him a chance to lay his information before the government. Jawaharlal Nehru addressed a mass meeting in Lahore, on 21 May, in which he had declared that there were going to be big changes in the country, in fact world history would be written in two countries, India and Russia, during the next few months. If Congress could not face the coming danger no other party could. It was impossible for the Congress to sit idle; there could be no compromise with the British Government. 'If we express willingness to form a Government under British Raj at this time, it would mean we accept British Raj, which I am not prepared to do for a moment.'⁹⁶ In an interview to the press at Lahore on 22 May, Jawaharlal reiterated his disagreement with Rajagopalachari's view on the division of the country. 'I have no objection to the League sticking to its demand and the Hindu Mahasabha to its own, but if they all agree to work together, first to liberate India, the solution of the communal problem will certainly become easier.' Now that the formation of a National Government was practically out of the question for the time being, he felt the question of the formation of guerilla bands did not arise. 'The Congress has never accepted the position that, while dealing with external attacks or internal disorders, the Congress would act non-violently, though that policy is neither fantastic nor dishonest.' He did not want to go to America lest his countrymen should begin to look towards America for all help even though he would welcome any help which America might give to India independently.⁹⁷ Jawaharlal had not met Gandhi for about seven weeks past.

Rajendra Prasad was better acquainted in this month with Gandhi's thinking regarding Congress policy; he said in a letter from Wardha to Kripalani, dated 5 May:

We saw Bapu yesterday and explained the whole position to him. He feels that though he does not like the resolution [the AICC 'War Resolution'], it does not bar his way and we can proceed further. He thinks there can be no other way than to go; that the British should leave India alone. It is only there [*sic*] that we shall be able to live true life and make our own arrangements. The period of transition may be a difficult period and we must be prepared for it, but it need not necessarily be so.

This letter was intercepted by the police in the UP; the Governor of the UP also had information that at a secret meeting early in May, Acharya Kripalani, the Congress General Secretary observed, in reviewing the Congress position, that 75 per cent of Congress workers were pro-Japanese and 100 per cent anti-British.⁹⁸ At the end of the month, the

governor reported to the governor-general that recent reports from the districts indicated that Congress was interesting itself in compensation for lands taken up for aerodrome construction, and that in Banaras the ex-minister, Sampurnanand, had offered to get the matter settled. 'The Congress policy of urging cultivators to store and hoard their grain still continues and may give rise to trouble.' There were numerous rumours, and there was also as usual no sign of recognition by Congressmen that there was any other Indian opinion other than that of the Congress. In summing up the Congress attitude in his province, home of the largest number of Congressmen who had participated in Gandhi's Individual Satyagraha movement in 1940-1, the governor wrote: 'it looks to me as if now that the Japanese menace has apparently decreased, partly owing to the monsoon, partly owing to our growing air power, Nehru and his followers may swing round more to the anti-British policy of Gandhi'.⁹⁹ Linlithgow wrote to Amery on 25 May that he tried to learn about Gandhi's plans from Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who had sought an audience with the viceroy with Gandhi's knowledge, but the interview with Amrit Kaur, the viceroy feared, was 'a barren business'.

She had nothing whatever to say except that Congress were now in a more difficult position than they had ever been in; we had reduced them to pulp and destroyed the national spirit; the Mahatma did not know what to do; the Cripps plan had been quite inadequate and so he had been unable to accept it or work with it; he had been and was under immense pressure to agree to some form of violence (I asked her if what he had in mind was a mass civil disobedience movement but she was not to be drawn on that); and that he most earnestly hoped that some assistance could be given from our side.

She said she had no particular proposition in mind, but that the Americans should leave this country and should immediately be followed by the British. In the viceroy's appreciation of the situation, Gandhi was looking for trouble to retrieve the Congress position damaged by the rejection of the Cripps mission proposals and by the revolt of Rajagopalachari.¹⁰⁰

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee, made certain in May that Gandhiji would not go to the rescue of Rajaji once the Congress organizational machinery was set in motion against Rajaji and his followers. On 7 May, Gandhiji wrote to Rajaji:

Vallabhbhai came today. He is firmly of the opinion that in carrying on your propaganda you are breaking the written word. So long as you remain a member of the Assembly under the Congress ticket which binds its members to carry out the policy from time to time laid down by the AICC

you are bound to carry it out. If that is so, it is your duty to resign the membership of the Assembly. You may not discuss at this stage the reasonableness or otherwise of the pledge. I want you to be above board. You should obey Vallabhbhai's ruling. The other members too feel likewise.

Rajaji, however, took many weeks to decide to quit the Congress voluntarily; he continued to assert his appreciation of the Indian situation and his right as a Congressman to seek to convert the Congress to his own point of view. B. Gopala Reddi, A. Kaleswara Rao, B. Sambamurti, Dr Subbaroyan and Satyamurthi were alleged to be sympathetic towards Rajaji, while the Andhra group, led by T. Prakasam, opposed Rajaji's proposals. Sardar Patel wrote to Satyamurthi on 23 May that Rajaji, a big man setting wrong example, had 'done tremendous mischief and harm to the Congress organisation'. Patel asked: 'Why does not the party [Tamil Nadu PCC] pull him up or has he got majority on his side from the Congress Assembly party?'¹⁰¹ In the last week of May, Jinnah and Khaliquzzaman stated in public speeches that, until the League's demand for Pakistan was accepted, there could be no agreement between the League and the Congress. Gandhiji explained in an article published in the *Harijan* of 7 June under the caption 'Differences Very Real', his position *vis-à-vis* Rajaji and Jinnah:

Today there is nothing to partition. After ridding the home of the foreign occupant, it [the League] can demand partition if it wishes and get it by negotiation or force. However, if it does not believe in India being the home of the Muslims, there is no question of negotiations for freeing India from bondage.

Regarding Rajaji's plan of political action, Gandhiji wrote:

He [Rajaji] wants to thrust himself on the British power which does not want him, for as the possessor by right of conquest it gets all it wants. In order to thrust himself on the British he gives the League the right of self-determination which every single individual has whether the others recognise it or not. Rajaji does not like partition and hugs the belief that his superfluous recognition of the inherent right will enable him to avoid partition.

Gandhiji hoped that his exposition of differences with Rajaji would make for healthy education of public opinion. In the second week of June, Acharya Kripalani, the Congress General Secretary, published in newspapers two remarkable historical-political articles on 'Self-determination', asserting that: 'Without positing a unit, self-determination is utter nonsense.' Kripalani obviously had in mind the Muslim League, the Akalis, the Hindu Mahasabha, Stafford Cripps, and the Communists, besides Rajaji and his supporters, when he observed:

Even when a unit is formulated it may not work unless the unit is judiciously and wisely chosen. Supposing the right of self-determination were allowed to a village, a municipality, a province, or a communal or religious group, instead of solving political difficulties, it will create new complications. Supposing again this right were granted to economic groups, who we are told must carry on their class struggle to the knife and between whom there can be no compromise and whose interests can never be identical, would it not be defeating the very object of the proletarian revolution?

Only a nation, said Kripalani, had a *prima facie* claim to the right of self-determination propounded by President Wilson of America during the First World War. In the name of this principle, religious groups could not 'again revive civil internal and international strife and bring back the mediaeval times and conditions in civilized countries.'

Rajaji called on Jinnah at Bombay on 25 and 26 June; it was said that in course of their meetings, Jinnah demanded that the anti-Pakistan resolution adopted by the AICC early in May must be withdrawn.

At the end of May, the AICC general secretary had instructed the provincial Congress committees of Tamil Nadu and Kerala that at all levels Congress committees and Congress office-bearers were expected to carry out the policy of the Congress, and that any action by them in support of Rajaji's Pakistan resolution and his new propaganda would be contrary to Congress policy and against Congress discipline. On 5 July, the President of the Tamil Nadu PCC addressed a letter to Rajaji asking him to show cause why disciplinary action should not be taken against him in view of his speeches in the past two months that tended to dissuade people from following the Congress policy. On 9 July, Rajaji wrote to inform the PCC president, Kamaraj, of his decision to resign his membership of the Congress and of the Madras Assembly on 15 July 1942, the date on which a resolution expressing want of confidence in the leadership of Rajaji was to be considered, in accordance with a formal notice already issued, by the Madras Congress Legislative Party. Rajaji's resignation, a decision which he took a long time in making, was regarded by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as an event of first class importance; few Congressmen, however, followed Rajaji out of the Congress. The Mahatma took a more modest view of Rajaji's separation from the Congress. It was said that Kamaraj Nadar, a selfless Congress worker, determined to turn the party into a disciplined fighting party from bottom to the top, had insisted that Rajaji give up his four-anna membership of the Congress and reduced Rajaji to the status of a non-party leader, a leader by courtesy. In the following months and years, Rajaji used his power of eloquence to condemn Congress policy and openly incited others against the Quit India movement.¹⁰²

Alienated from the Congress party in Tamil Nadu in 1942, at the testing time, Rajaji could never again count for much in the Congress, though his friendship with Jawaharlal and his old record of thirty years of service to the Congress raised him on independence to the position of the first and last Indian Governor-General of India. He was a great patriot in his own distinctive way, even after he ceased to be great Congressman in a crucial year in Congress history.

While Rajaji disagreed entirely with Mahatma Gandhi in April-May 1942 over the War Resolution and the Mahatma's proposed movement, Jawaharlal disagreed not with the Mahatma's intended action but with the approach the Mahatma had adopted in his draft War Resolution sent through Mira Ben to Allahabad. On his return from the Punjab, Jawaharlal learnt at Delhi on 24 May from an American diplomat that they had information from an unimpeachable source that Gandhi was planning to launch a mass civil disobedience movement, and that Gandhi was in touch with Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad and others who were touring the provinces to ascertain the measure of support for such a programme.¹⁰³ Jawaharlal immediately proceeded to Wardha and spent one day (27-8 May) with Gandhiji, listening to his appreciation of the political situation of the country. 'He feels he cannot remain passive spectator of what is happening and any risks are preferable to submission to repression of the people and consequent spiritual degradation.'¹⁰⁴

From Wardha, Jawaharlal proceeded to Lucknow where he got acquainted with the stiffening of attitudes of the provincial government and the provincial Congressmen. For printing certain leading articles on 'War and the Congress', the UP Government issued on 26 May an order forfeiting two securities of Rs 3,000 each deposited by the publisher and printer of the *National Herald* and demanded two fresh securities of Rs 6,000 each from them. At the PCC meeting at Lucknow on 31 May, Purushottam Das Tandon moved a resolution welcoming the AICC War Resolution and calling on the CWC to give serious and early consideration to the question and methods of wresting power for the people of India from the hands of British imperialism. Balakrishna Sharma moved an amendment demanding withdrawal of foreign armies and complete transfer of power, and calling upon the people of the United Provinces to be ready to wrest power and establish an independent National Government. Jawaharlal told the assembled Congressmen from the districts that Tandonji's resolution did not say what it would actually require Congressmen to do, and Sharmaji's amendment was a sea of words.¹⁰⁵ From Allahabad on June 5, Jawaharlal wrote to Maulana Azad; 'I know that we cannot do much but even so this inactive condition is bound to injure the Congress. What we should do is another matter.' He proposed to reach Wardha on 7 June for a full and frank talk with Gandhiji on what should be done; he hoped that Maulana Azad would

be able to go straight from Calcutta, in spite of poor health and the heat, to Wardha to discuss the situation.

On 12-14 June, at Wardha, Jawaharlal wrote a confidential note on the conversations they had with 'Bapu' from 8 to 12 June 1942. 'The time has come for us to emphasize and concentrate on complete independence and the total withdrawal of British power from India. This was Mahatma Gandhi's firm conviction. 'The demand for the withdrawal of British rule from India means in effect the acknowledgement of India's independence and then consultations on this basis between representatives of India and England for the transfer of power and for mutual adjustment of relations between the two countries, especially in view of the War that is going on.' The demand did not mean the withdrawal of Britishers as such or even of the British and American forces; it did mean full transfer of political power to Indian representatives, and a treaty or arrangement for the joint defence of India by the Allied armies. 'The demand for independence and transfer of political power must be acceded to independently of any arrangements being made in India for the governance of the country after the British withdrawal.' There were no illusions regarding the British Government's Indian policy and punitive power; there was no question of doing anything to facilitate the Japanese invasion of India or Japanese aggression in China. The task before the Congress was clear; action to make the mentality of the masses 'vital and resentful of any invasion or of submission', and desperately intent on the goal of freedom of India from political slavery.

In the event (which is not only likely but almost certain) of Britain not agreeing to Indian independence, the *status quo* cannot be tolerated and something must be done to change it. That is some kind of a direct action movement should be started. But before this is done the public mind must be well prepared for it, and in initiating or carrying on that movement every care should be taken that it does not directly or indirectly aid the Japanese or any other invader of India. Apart from this, the movement should be envisaged as a mass movement and there should be as few restrictions as possible on the people who wish to join it. Nor should any untoward incidents lead to its suspension or withdrawal. The movement must aim at independence and be carried on till this achieved.

The actual decision for any major step would be based on the actual national and international position after some weeks or months. Meanwhile, some kind of local resistance or opposition to the British Government might become necessary in the case of sudden and improper evacuation orders or other orders which harassed the people. Jawaharlal drafted Gandhi's letter dated Sevagram, 14 June, addressed to Chiang Kai-shek, explaining that Gandhi's appeal to the British power to withdraw from India was not meant in any shape to weaken India's military

defence against the Japanese or embarrass the Chinese people in their struggle, and that he would take no hasty action. On the same date, Jawaharlal wrote to an American diplomat at New Delhi to say that the blindness and obstinacy of the British Government had created a situation of extreme gravity in India; that they appeared to be determined to bring about a conflict with the Congress and nationalist elements against whom repression and arrests had already started. It was possible that Congress might be crushed by severe repression.¹⁰⁶

About this time, reports persisted in political circles in Wardha that Mahatma Gandhi was bent upon starting a new and big movement which, in effect, might paralyse normal life, that five members of the Working Committee had already threatened to resign as a protest against the delay in calling a meeting of the Working Committee, and that, though disagreeing with Gandhiji regarding the presence of foreign troops in India, Jawaharlal would not take acts of repression or harassment lying down. The possibilities of evolving an acceptable formula to bring together the two feuding Congress committees ('the official Congress' and 'the other Congress' following Sarat Bose) at Calcutta, to set up a united Congress front in Bengal without undermining the leadership of one or the other, and to get the disciplinary action taken by the Working Committee in 1939-40 withdrawn, were being explored at Wardha where Niharendu Dutt Mazumdar (MLA, Bengal) had gone for talks with Mahatma Gandhi in early June.

On 21 June, newspapers published the text of a spirited letter by Fazlul Huq, the Bengal Premier, addressed to prominent Muslim Leaguers explaining his proposal for a progressive All-India Muslim League which would work in the provinces and at the centre in collaboration with other nationalist parties, including the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, in this time of crisis and danger. Fazlul Huq, who had been expelled from the Muslim League in early December 1941, said that the will of one man prevailed in the Muslim League, that the League did not include in its fold various essential sections of the Muslims of India, and that the League under Jinnah was neither Islamic nor patriotic in policy:

But the most regrettable feature of the All-India Muslim League is the fact that prominent members of the League do not hesitate to encourage hooliganism and goondaism in order to enforce the arbitrary decisions of the League leaders. And all these hooligans and goondas are backed by scurrilous writers in the Muslim League press.

This statement was one of the most outspoken attacks on Jinnah's League made by an eminent nationalist Muslim politician in the war years. Fazlul Huq was a Bengali to the core in his culture and emotions;

at that time, he was known to be anxious for an *entente cordiale* with the Forward Bloc and the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal politics. On 22 June, the Government of India acted to prevent the reported moves for a strong and united front in Bengal and a Congress-Forward Bloc agreement on national action. The All India Forward Bloc was declared unlawful by a notification under the new Defence of India Rule 27(A) published simultaneously with this banning order. The notification said:

The Central Government is satisfied with respect to the organisation known as the All-India Forward Bloc that the persons in control thereof have had association with persons concerned in the Government of States at war with His Majesty and that there is danger of the utilisation of the said organisation for purposes prejudicial to the defence of British India, the public safety, the maintenance of public order and the efficient prosecution of the war.

The new Defence of India rule provided that no person should in any way assist the operations of such an organization, and that contravention of the new DIR was made punishable with imprisonment extending to seven years or with fine or with both.¹⁰⁷

Subhas Chandra Bose, the Forward Bloc leader who had escaped to Germany in 1941, was certainly the most popular figure of all-India stature among nationalists whom Gandhiji described as the 'violence group'. M.N. Roy's group of Radical Congressmen had turned into loud critics of the official Congress and supporters of the British Government's war effort against the fascist since 1940. Another 'violence group', the Communists were still officially within the Congress organization, but in 1942 they were widely suspected to be engaged in playing a double game, more in favour of the British Government than of the official Congress. In May and June, Communist workers released from jail were working for 'a people's war' against Germany and Japan.

The government announced on 11 June that Great Britain and Russia had signed on 26 May a 20-year military pact. The Anglo-American alliance was largely contributing to the strengthening of Great Britain's military position in India with aircraft, airmen and war equipment. The United States Technical Mission's recommendations regarding the development of war supplies production in British Indian factories were published in New Delhi on 4 June, and in the following week the Governor-General's Council set up a committee to deal with the problems of war supplies and production. On 6 June, it was announced in New Delhi that immense quantities of military equipment, troops representing every branch of the British army, and thousands of airmen had arrived in the largest ever single convoy to India in war-time.

In the first week of June, the Assam Government issued a circular declaring that deserters from government posts would be severely dealt

with, and an ordinance brought transport, electricity, scheduled banks, hospitals and district board jobs under the essential services list in Assam.

To provide accommodation for troops and other personnel and offices, the Government requisitioned educational buildings and private houses in many towns in eastern India.

The Calcutta University and its affiliated colleges were closed for an indefinite period. The Bengal Government issued a notification on 17 June saying that Government schools for boys and institutions for girls and women in Calcutta and its adjacent industrial areas as well as in the town of Chittagong would not reopen after summer holidays until further orders. Teachers and students everywhere were worried about their future, and many students left towns in the danger zone to seek admission to schools in villages in Bengal. Japanese aircraft were active on the border between India and Burma, but no big Japanese invasion in the immediate future was now feared, because of the onset of the monsoon in June. The situation in North Africa remained dangerous for the British forces; Tobruk with its garrison of many thousands of British, South African and Indian soldiers fell on 21 June to the surprise attack launched by General Rommel who now threatened a German invasion of Egypt.

The Government of India's propaganda war against the Congress waged from New Delhi, London and Washington reached a new pitch of intensity after Gandhi started writing in the *Harijan* explanations of his demand that Indian independence be declared immediately. On his part, Gandhi was never more brilliant in political journalism than in June-July 1942. Gandhiji addressed his countrymen primarily to educate public opinion in his essential idea that it was the proper psychological moment for the Indian people to demand a declaration of Indian independence and for British statesmanship to electrify India and the world by conceding this demand. To numerous people in India and abroad, Gandhi's decision to start a Quit India movement seemed unpleasant, unpractical, and unwise. In reply to criticism made by *The Times* of London, Gandhiji stated, on 22 June: 'Sir Stafford Cripps' proposals have been weighed by India and after great deliberations rejected by all parties. It is an insult to India to repeat those proposals as the final word of British statesmanship.' Gandhiji regarded his proposal as foolproof; he held that any person, however great, who distorted the Quit India demand would be condemned by history as an enemy of the Allied cause in this war.

Operations of the Allied forces against Japanese aggression have been left intact under my proposal which amounts to this that Britain should become true to her declaration, withdraw from India as conqueror and therefore

controller of her destiny, and leave India to shape her own destiny without the slightest interference. This as I can see puts her case on a moral basis and gives her in India a great ally not in cause of imperialism but in cause of human freedom.

Did British rule stand between slavery and freedom of the Indian people, or between anarchy and good government? 'If there is anarchy in India, Britain alone will be responsible. What I have said is that I would prefer anarchy to the present slavery and consequent impotence of India,' said Gandhi. In his view it was all speculation as to what could happen after British withdrawal, voluntary and orderly or forced.¹⁰⁸ Under the caption 'Pertinent Questions', Gandhi wrote in the *Harijan* of 19 July that the force of circumstances had given rise to the Quit India demand, and that it was 'a demand made upon Britain to do the right irrespective of the capacity of party wronged to bear the consequences of Britain's right act'. Further: 'If India is the stake and not British honour we should know. My demand then loses force but not justness.' His demand was not based on the nation's demonstrable strength either in non-violence of the strong, or in nationalist violence. 'The nation, as a whole, has never been and never been claimed to be non-violent. What part is, cannot be said with any accuracy.' The nation was disarmed and the Allied troops enjoyed full mastery over Indians from purely police and military viewpoints. His personal position was different from that of the Congress president. 'Maulana Saheb, it is well known, does not hold my view that any country can defend itself without force of arms. My demand is based on the view that it is possible [for one] to defend one's country non-violently.' Gandhi's position should not be compared with that of Subhas Chandra Bose. 'My demand deals with the possessor; Subhas Babu will bring German troops to oust the possessor. Germany is under no obligation to deliver India from bondage. Therefore, Subhas Babu's performance can only fling India from the frying pan into the fire.' How could the freeing of India help China or the Allied cause at this juncture? 'India at present gives such indifferent and ill-conceived aid as the Allies think desirable. Free India can send men and material that China may need.'

How could the conceding of the Quit India demand help the British and the American people in this war? Gandhi's reply to this was stated best in his letter of 1 July 1942 to President Roosevelt, which was drafted by Jawaharlal and carried from Sevagram to Washington by Louis Fisher: 'I would like to turn into goodwill the ill will which, whatever may be said to the contrary, exists in India towards Great Britain and thus enable the millions of Indians to play their part in the present War.' Not all Indians had a living faith in non-violence. 'Under foreign rule, however we can make no effective contribution of any kind in this War,

except as helots.' British policy towards India as exposed by the Cripps Mission had opened the eyes of the Congress and had driven Gandhi to the proposal he had made.

I venture to think [said Gandhi in this letter to Roosevelt], 'that the Allied declaration that the Allies are fighting to make the world safe for freedom of the individual and for democracy sounds hollow, so long as India and, for that matter, Africa are exploited by Great Britain, and America has the Negro problem in her own home. But in order to avoid all complications, in my proposal I have confined myself only to India. If India becomes free, the rest must follow, if it does not happen simultaneously.

For preventing Japanese aggression and defending China, the Allies might keep their troops, at their own expense, in India. 'So far as India is concerned, she must become free even as America and Great Britain are.' He was a friend and well-wisher of the Allies, not an enemy of the British and American people among whom he had numerous personal friends. What did the Mahatma say to the Japanese? Under the caption 'To Every Japanese', he wrote in the *Harijan* of 26 July 1942: 'Ours is an unarmed revolt against British rule. An important party in the country is engaged in a deadly but friendly quarrel with the foreign rulers.' He had no ill-will against the Japanese people; he had an undying faith in the responsiveness of human nature. 'To Britain and the Allies we have appealed in the name of justice, in proof of their professions and in their own self-interest. To you I appeal in the name of humanity. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that ruthless warfare is nobody's monopoly.' It was wrong to raise violence to the dignity of a religion; non-violence was the only solvent of the militarist spirit and imperialist ambition. Indians should not be ignorable spectators of the militarization of the world. The Japanese would not receive a willing welcome from India:

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the offer of free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated.

He intensely disliked the Japanese attack on China and its imperialist ambition, 'whether it is called British imperialism, German Nazism or your pattern'.

Gandhi's appeal 'To Every Briton', published in the *Harijan* of 17 May 1942, had asked every Briton to support him in his appeal to the British Government to retire benevolently and wisely at that very hour from every Asiatic and African possession and at least from India. On 14 June, Gandhiji had written to Chiang Kai-shek: 'I am trying to enlist

world opinion in favour of a proposition which to me appears self-proved and which must lead to strengthening of India's and China's defence.¹⁰⁹

Gandhi's Quit India demand was adopted by the Working Committee's Wardha resolution of 14 July 1942 as the Congress demand. The text of the resolution was based on Mahatma Gandhi's confidential draft for the Working Committee dated 9 July 1942. Gandhiji's draft had said: 'For the regulation and quick development of the mass movement the Working Committee authorise Gandhiji to take charge of it and regulate it in the manner he may think advisable.' The resolution put this important point blandly: 'Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji.' The resolution did not include the following sentence which appeared in Gandhiji's draft:

The struggle this time would have to resolve itself into a mass movement on the widest scale possible involving voluntary strikes, voluntary non-cooperation on the part of all those who are in government employ or in departments connected with government in any shape or form and it may involve also non-payment of land revenue and taxes.

The element of threat to the British authorities was reduced to a single sentence: 'The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it may have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy for the vindication of political rights and liberty.'

The justification for the Quit India demand was stated in the resolution on the lines of Gandhi's various statements made in May and June, but the material was so edited as to emphasize the committee's view that the Congress would like to avoid, so far as possible, in contemplated action of a widespread struggle, embarrassment to 'the United Nations'. Gandhiji's draft, a forthright statement, mentioned 'the Allies', not the United Nations. Gandhiji's words indicating that the Congress 'would seek the help of the Allies in securing British acceptance of its demand' were not retained by the Working Committee, but the idea was implicit in the tenor of the resolution's words referring to the United Nations. The Committee accepted from Gandhiji's draft a statement of the political ideology of the Congress which would be valued by the peasantry and industrial labour in independent India: 'For the first time in India's history realisation will come home that princes, jagirdars, zamindars, propertied and monied classes derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields or factories and elsewhere to whom alone all power and authority must belong.' This made Congress Socialists and the orthodox Congress kisan and labour leaders happy, and the M.N. Roy group and the Communists could not find this declaration displeasing.¹¹⁰

To some of the Congress Socialists and others who had ardently pleaded for a mass movement against British Rule in 1940-1, Gandhi's decision to start a widespread struggle in 1942 appeared rather disconcerting, probably because of its timing, its novelty in putting a summary demand, and the surprising force and note of impatience for freedom which the Master of Satyagraha put into his words in these months.¹¹¹ But once Gandhi raised his banner of revolt against foreign domination, it was commonly felt that the Congress Socialists and the Forward Bloc sympathizers would ardently join the movement. In 1940-1, students were not qualified to sign the Satyagraha Pledge prescribed for Congressmen; Gandhi and Congress leaders had repeatedly asked students to do nothing to vitiate the peaceful course of the strictly disciplined and strictly limited Individual Satyagraha Movement. In 1942, however, the movement would not be confined to small numbers, and Gandhi himself would be ready to offer satyagraha personally. Gandhi was preparing ground for a movement by unlimited numbers of patriots, an 'open rebellion', by him and by all who would choose to follow him, in asserting by non-violent non-cooperation the Quit India demand. In an article published in the *Harijan* of 12 July, Gandhi called upon the Muslims of India, including those who believed in the Muslim League's Pakistan idea, to join the civil Quit India movement he proposed to lead. He wished to see the British power displaced or withdrawn in an orderly manner; he denied the suggestion of his critics that he was a modern Nero, and said: 'I am lighting my own funeral pyre to end the agony.'

Jinnah stated on 14 July that the Congress and Gandhi had declared themselves for Akhand Hindustan (Undivided India) and their Quit India demand and their call for civil disobedience aimed at the establishment of Congress Raj, which amounted to Hindu Raj, by embarrassing the British Government at a time of crisis. On 24 July, Jinnah called upon the Muslims of India not to be a party to the Congress call for Quit India. The Hindu Mahasabha leader, Savarkar, declared on 18 July that the tactics and policies of the Congress party were unacceptable to Hindus and Muslims alike. The Muslim League was unofficially supporting the British war-effort, the Hindu Mahasabha was supporting the British war-effort officially and in action by encouraging Hindus to seek recruitment in the armed forces in large numbers. Ambedkar, spokesman of the Depressed Classes, declared on 27 July that Gandhi's new move in politics, envisaging a mass movement against the British Government, was both irresponsible and insane. As the temperature in nationalist politics mounted, Savarkar found it necessary to issue on 2 August a statement clarifying the Hindu Mahasabha position: the Mahasabha would support the 'Quit India' demand of the Congress, if the Congress would make an unequivocal statement pledging itself to India's territorial integrity and indivisibility. In the absence of such a statement by the

Congress, the Mahasabha could not support the proposed movement. Leaders of moderate opinion deplored Gandhi's insistence on British withdrawal while Japan was threatening an invasion of the country. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru proposed on 26 July a round table conference to find a formula to break the deadlock and to end the tension prevailing in the country. On the same day, 26 July, there appeared in the *Harijan* Gandhi's declaration that he would not hesitate to go to extreme limits in his 'biggest movement', if he found that no impression was produced on the British Government or the Allied powers. He was ready to meet the viceroy to explain his purpose and to discuss the situation; he might launch the new movement one week after the coming AICC session (7-8 August) at Bombay; even if he was arrested, the movement would not stop once launched.

In the interval between the Wardha resolution of the Working Committee (14 July) and the AICC meeting at Bombay (7 August), the government were busy finalizing their plan for dealing with the Quit India movement. The situation reports sent in this period by the provincial governors to the governor-general, also those sent by the governor-general to the secretary of state, show that the Government of India maintained without hesitation its old policy of toughness towards the Indian National Congress. In repressive power, the government were masters of the situation, and they were determined to put the Congress out of the way so that they would be free to exploit the Indian empire for winning the war in the East and the Middle East. Churchill, Amery and Linlithgow regarded it as their duty to maintain undiminished and unimpaired the British hold on India during the war and as long as practicable in the future after the war also. They did not, however, underestimate the power of Gandhi and of the Congress in producing political embarrassment, and the need for the Government of India of cultivating the goodwill and active support of the anti-Congress or pro-Government elements in Indian political life.

In the viceroy's appreciation, the Wardha resolution of July to some extent represented a compromise and that the Mahatma's object was to work on the nerves of people in England and the United States of America. Linlithgow wrote to Amery on 28 July: 'Congress have unfortunately got themselves into so tight a jam that I do not see much change for them to get out without loss of face.' Regarding Gandhi, Linlithgow said: 'We should make a great mistake if we were to underestimate the amount of trouble he can give us, or the amount of following which he may look for. His banner is bound to attract very substantial numbers of people, even if some of them are not too convinced of the merits of the case.'¹¹² Gandhi was admired even by the Indian King's Commissioned officers. The viceroy was told by Firoz Khan Noon on 27 July that 'while they might not favour the Congress policy, they, Muhammadans alike

with the Hindus, were very much for Gandhi as the one man who could make the British sit up: and that he was not free from doubt as to the extent to which, if it came to firing, they would be anxious to fire on Congress supporters.¹¹³

In the Punjab, the province which supplied the largest number of Muslim and Sikh mercenaries, Sikander Hayat Khan, the premier, was steady and active in his support to the British Government. He feared that Gandhi might make a united front with Jinnah. On 15 June 1942 Sikander made a pact with Baldev Singh providing for certain concessions to the Sikhs in return for which Baldev undertook to join Sikander's Unionist Government. The Governor of the Punjab had no anxiety about the anti-Congress attitude of the Muslim press in general, but 'Master Tara Singh and his Akalis are notorious for their habit of 'sailing in two boats' and, in spite of the Sikander-Baldev Singh pact, they have by no means severed their connection with the Congress.'

The Congress Party in the Punjab was at a low ebb; the Gopichand Bhargava group and the Dr Satyapal group were continually at loggerheads; the Congress Communists would not support the Quit India movement and, in case of such a movement, the Congress Akalis would be in an awkward position in view of their serious internal differences and their recent pact with Sikander.¹¹⁴

In the North-West Frontier Province, the Red Shirt Camp started by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the last week of July attracted few people apart from his regular following which was rather meagre in this period. Dr Khan Sahib's popularity had suffered much because of the non-Islamic marriage of his daughter; several maulvis, who had been working for the government for a long time, had now come out with strong anti-Congress speeches. The Red Shirts were not welcome in the Malakand Agency, and the Mohmands and the Afridis objected to any visit to their tribal areas by Congress agents.¹¹⁵

In Sind, Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, the premier, was the leader of the pro-Congress All-India Azad Muslim Board, but no trouble was apprehended from him. Congress workers were unlikely to disturb the peace in a province large parts of which were under martial law proclaimed on 1 June 1942 because of the plundering raids and violence by the Hurs; in Upper Sind there was a serious flood from about the middle of July.¹¹⁶

'Herbert (Governor of Bengal) is not very certain of the attitude of Huq (Premier) who under Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's influence shows signs of wobbling with the result that Bengal Government may be reluctant to take necessary action.' In Orissa, the credit of the Coalition Ministry headed by the Maharaja of Parlakhemundi stood at low ebb. The Congress might contemplate a special set at this province, in their effort to

restore the Congress position and influence. 'The estimate that comes to me,' wrote the Orissa governor from Cuttack on 29 July,

from a variety of sources is that Congress would be unlikely to get from this Province anything like the response for which they would hope, but that local Congress leaders would certainly associate themselves without question in any campaign launched by the Mahatma and that on sentimental grounds others in not inconsiderable numbers would be ready to court imprisonment.

The Gandhi cult of non-violence had always had a marked appeal for the Oriya temperament. Biswanath Das, ex-Premier of Orissa, was arrested at Berhampore on 30 June under the DIR, in connection with a speech delivered by him at Aska.¹¹⁷

'It is unlikely,' reported the Assam governor on 25 July from Shillong,

that any Congress movement now would have the same force and enthusiasm as the 1921-22 campaign, and in subsequent efforts at civil disobedience there appear to have been no resignations. On the whole it seems likely, therefore, that the police would be staunch but there may be cases, as there probably have been in the past, of individuals who show a lack of enthusiasm for dealing with political offenders who may in the future have political power.

The presence of troops in Assam had already proved useful in stiffening police morale.¹¹⁸

In Bihar, troops were under training with American supply weapons in camps in the hills and jungle areas of Chhota Nagpur in preparation for the reconquest of Burma. Because of events in Libya and Russia, a feeling was abroad in Bihar that Germany's superiority on land was definitely established; but trains proceeding through Bihar to Calcutta were now crowded, because Japanese inactivity against India in the past few weeks had restored, to some extent, confidence for the immediate future. Bihar supplied a large number of labourers to the Calcutta-Howrah industrial area. The province was a stronghold of the Congress, but Godbole, the Chief Secretary of the Bihar Government, was inclined to think that the new movement of Gandhi would be as much of a 'flop' as the last in 1940-1. The governor, however, was inclined to think that there might be a sufficiency of *pro-forma* martyrs to embarrass the authorities in regard to jail accommodation. He said in the same report, dated 15 July: 'We are removing the Communist element from the lists of the 'taller poppies' as it does not seem likely that they will join with Congress.' In his telegram of 19 July, the Bihar governor said: 'I respectfully agree with Your Excellency's view that we should endeavour to

stimulate public criticism of Congress resolution. [M.N.] Roy's lieutenants are already at work in this direction and we are approaching Sahajanand of Kisan Sabha with a view to his taking similar action.' There had been a considerable addition to the police force in Bihar; the morale of the services was good, but a successful movement by Congress sympathizers to socially boycott families of policemen might be attended with serious results, was the assessment. As yet, there was no marked enthusiasm among Congressmen and the Congress press in Bihar for the new movement, but much would depend on what Rajendra Prasad would do under instructions from Wardha, in the coming weeks.¹¹⁹

In the United Provinces, the Congress campaign for the Quit India movement was being vigorously carried on by means of meetings addressed by leaders; At such meetings secret instructions regarding the movement were given orally. The authorities had information from various sources, including a letter from a correspondent of the *National Herald*, Allahabad, to the *Hindustan Times*, showing that the mass movement would include all known forms of civil disobedience, including even cutting telegraph wires. An order for the arrest of Purushottam Das Tandon, speaker, UP Legislative Assembly, would be issued soon. 'His speeches have been most dangerous. Nehru seems to be at present less dangerous.' The governor said that delay in action against the Congress after the AICC meeting at Bombay would be disastrous; it would give Congress more time for organization, and their mass movement would start at a more favourable season, owing to the lull in cultivation activities, proximity of big religious festivals (Dussera and Diwali) and possible intensification of the war with Japan on the Burma front. The governor pressed for crushing the Congress organization, so that government might be free of further Congress-inspired agitation for the duration of the war. On 28 July, the governor wrote to the governor-general: 'If only Working Committee are deported (a suggestion under consideration of the Government of India, at this time), we should only get rid of Nehru and Pant and would be left with more dangerous organizers such as Kidwai and Paliwal (already detained), Tandon, Sampurnand and many others of local importance, as well as Forward Bloc leaders now detained.' The governor did not favour deportation of leaders; it was not likely to have a great deterrent effect. 'Deportation of large numbers which is impossible might be deterrent but removal of selected few apart from eliciting sympathy of Liberals might provoke subordinate leaders to give more trouble in jails by hunger strikes, breaches of discipline, &c, and outside jails to make greater efforts to extend movement.' The governor suggested that this time no visitors of any kind be allowed in jails, the press be controlled or suppressed, and the government show that they mean business by

arresting all Congress organizers in all districts in early stages of the movement. These actions, being on lines followed in previous movements, would not provoke popular criticism or elicit sympathy in the country.¹²⁰

The Governor of the Central Provinces reported on 20 July that people in Maharashtra were said to think that Gandhi was playing a game of dilatory tactics and had no intention of launching a mass movement. 'Personally I do not expect that anything serious will arise from threatened movement which may very well develop on familiar lines into a newspaper campaign and some prejudicial acts of symbolic character. I feel convinced that a sensational mass movement is not feasible especially in view of Muhammadan hostility. On 29 July, the governor wrote that he was in favour of deportation of a limited few of Congress leaders on account of the moral effect which would be produced by 'an uncompromising rejoinder to uncompromising treachery'. According to latest information, he said, the Congress movement would be designed on the most subversive and dangerous lines. The governor wrote on 1 August that he could not exaggerate the importance of beheading the Quit India movement before it started. However, he still thought that Gandhi's prospects of achieving a mass movement were particularly poor.

I still have vivid recollections of the success achieved against the second civil disobedience movement of 1932 when I was personally in charge of the counter-measures in Bengal. That movement was associated with the worst phase of the terrorist campaign and yet, by having all our plans ready at zero hour, declaring unlawful all Congress Executive Committees and seizing their premises, the movement was virtually brought under control in three weeks and in many cases it was not even necessary to arrest the personnel of local Congress Committees.

The governor had a draft Gazette Extraordinary ready for immediate publication at zero hour together with a Code as Instructions to District Officers on how to proceed against the Congress. The local Congress organ, *Nagpur Times*, had stated that Gandhi was reported to have told a prominent Congressman: 'I find life impossible in this country. Our being inactive at this critical juncture might even mean an invitation to the Japanese. Now the world will see non-violence in full action.' The governor thought that Gandhi's aim could be to give *carte blanche* to all provincial and local Congress organizations to indulge in all possible methods of embarrassing the local authorities without any control from Wardha. 'This, of course, is the most difficult form of movement to cope with and is what Congress aimed at in 1930-32.' There would now be a weakening of supporters of the move for a Minority Ministry in the

Central Provinces; no doubt, some Congress leaders favouring this move till recently were beginning to think that 'they had better join in with the threatened civil disobedience movement in order to better their election prospects and to lay up treasure for themselves in the eventual Congress Heaven.'¹²¹

The great consensus of opinion, among people whom the governor of the Madras Presidency consulted in the third week of July, was that Congress was thinking of committing an act of criminal folly in threatening the government with mass agitation. Non-Congress people, even Congress sympathizers, were coming out with really strong statements without any prompting from the governor. For the moment, Rajagopalachari had gone to ground. There were a great many people who sympathized with Rajagopalachari's views but did not have the courage or the financial stability to break away from the Congress party; if any mass movement did start, it must be squashed at the beginning; local leaders arrested in any province should be imprisoned in another province, and those convicted should be treated as common prisoners, and any mention in the press about their conditions, food, and other things in jail should be prohibited. 'I feel that a long rope is much more likely to entangle our legs than it will the Congress neck, and I know that this is your view as well.' 'As far as I can make out, there is genuine alarm among the local Congress leaders, outside the extremists, and I do not think that any disobedience movement would have very much support here, although in the Andhra country it would be stronger than in the Tamil.' The governor had a clear answer to the difficult question of what to do with Gandhi:

Likewise, as regards the villain of the piece, Gandhi, he still has great influence among the ignorant masses, and any mention of his name or state of health excites them. If the movement comes to anything, I would suggest arresting him at once and deporting him to Mauritius or Kenya, and prohibit any reference to him in the Press. If he fasts let it not be known; and if he dies announce it six months later.

On 30 July, the governor reported to the governor-general that he and his advisers were united in supporting the view that important provincial leaders should be jailed outside their own provinces. 'Our list has 43 names at present.' But opinion in Madras too was divided regarding the deportation of Working Committee members and possibly a few others. The great bulk of the Vernacular press were pro-Congress, and unless suppressed or controlled the press would do a great deal to keep the movement alive. On 31 July, the Governor of Madras informed the governor-general of a circular from the Andhra Provincial Congress Party to all district Congress committees:

This circular was issued after a meeting at the house of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya on July 28th attended by Prakasam and 29 other leading Andhra Congressmen (a number of whom are for arrest at stage 2). At meeting it was stated *inter alia* that all Congressmen would be expected to take part and others would be invited. Also that picking [picketing?] of troops would be left to members of Gandhi's Sevakhsangh only. This material was obtained from Provincial C.I.D. . . . no similar meeting or issue of circular seems to have occurred in Tamil or Kerala areas — it might even be a trap.¹²²

Below is a condensed version, prepared by the Madras Government (for telegram to New Delhi, dated 31 July 1942), of the Andhra Circular, a unique document of the Quit India Movement:

Begins. Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. Confidential. Presidents and Secretaries of District Congress Committees should begin to organise for forthcoming movement at once and report weekly. The movement must go swiftly and this requires a succession of capable organisers, all acts must be non-violent and overt. Immediate lines of work include:-

1. Collection of information as regards items of programme — Porombokes (?) with Toddy-yielding tree [s] — natural salt deposits liquor shops — railway stations — telegraph and telephone lines — troop locations — recruitment centres etc.
2. Organisation of meetings and intensive propaganda in villages at once. Disobedience may be individual, generalised individually or mass.

Items of programme: *Group 1.* First stage. (a) Breaking of prohibitory orders. (b) Picking of salt. (c) Continuing openly to be members of Unlawful Associations. *Group 2.* Second stage. (a) Items of N[on] C[o] O[peration]. Lawyers to leave practice, students to leave colleges, jurors and assessors not to respond to summons. (b) Government officers including village officers to resign their jobs. *Group 3.* Third stage. Arranging labour strikes. *Group 4.* Fourth stage. (a) Picketing of foreign cloth shops. (b) Liquor shops. (c) Foreign concerns in trade and industry. *Group 5.* Fifth stage. Following items are not prohibited but not encouraged and to be considered at this stage only. (a) Stopping trains by pulling chains. (b) Travelling without tickets. (c) Cutting Toddy-yielding trees only. (d) Cutting telegraph and telephone wires. (N.B. Rails should not be removed or permanent way obstructed.) No danger to life should be a great caution. *Group 6.* Practically last stage. (a) Non-taxes including municipal taxes. Especially Zamindari rent should not be paid if Zamindar will not join movement. (b) Picketing of troops.

Convictions. When people are sent to jail they need not keep quiet as usual. But they should continue disobedience here, also work and dock [sic] out strikes. Hunger-strikes also should be undertaken but voluntarily on personal risk of individual as it may lead to glory of self-immolation. *Ends.*¹²³

From Bombay, the governor informed the governor-general on 21 July that the provincial branch of the government-organized National War Front was assisting Communists and Royists to produce leaflets for the anti-Congress campaign. Supporters of Congress were said to have no enthusiasm for a movement, but few were expected to go against the party line. 'Some Congress supporters look for intervention from America and other United Nations countries, and believe that to be the object of the resolution, but the more widely held belief is that Gandhi means business.' A close contact of Sardar Patel's said that no definite plan of action for civil disobedience had yet been prepared. On 31 July, the Governor reported: 'If gossip can be believed, Patel is said to have told hearers at private meetings that they should not be too squeamish about violence this time.' Patel had been in Gujarat organizing; he saw Kasturbhai Lallbhai. Mill-owners in Ahmedabad would be in a dilemma if they were pressed to give up war contracts. Labour in Ahmedabad was largely under Congress influence, and in Gujarat, Congress would have a large volume of support for the movement. Bombay City also might extend appreciable support to the Congress; the upper middle classes would probably assist covertly; the lower middle classes were most likely to join openly in action in support of the Congress. Employers in Bombay believed that labour would not be affected. 'Royists and Communists separately talk of protest meetings, though I am not yet convinced that Communists will not be an embarrassment.' Muslim press had been consistently critical of Congress 'Blackmail' tactics, and Dehlavi told the governor that Jinnah had expressed his belief that the British would remain firm. Opposition to the Congress had developed quite well, but it was clear to the governor that the opposition in India and abroad to the Quit India demand had had no effect on Sardar Patel, 'except to make him more truculent'. On 5 August, the governor reported: 'Patel appears to have whipped up a good deal of enthusiasm' in Ahmedabad and Gujarat. The immediate arrest of Patel would encourage any wavering government servants, for Patel was reported to be planning 'Anti-Government Servants Day' in Ahmedabad and elsewhere. The governor was, however, unwilling to press for Patel's early arrest: 'it would no doubt destroy any possible chances of Congress backing out'. The atmosphere changed and became revolutionary in outlook in Bombay after Patel's first enormous meeting in the city, which was attended possibly by a lakh of people. Yusuf Meherally, the Mayor of Bombay, General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, and President of the All-India Students' Conference (1941), spent much time inciting students. Shankarrao Deo, a member of the Working Committee, was among other leaders who were prominent in whipping up enthusiasm in Bombay by the time the AICC met.¹²⁴

On 2 August 1942, the Government of India in the Home Department

thus summed up their appreciation of Congress plans for a Quit India movement:

Indications as to character of movement are still indefinite but Gandhi's probable intention is to give wide discretion to individuals to embark on any line of action whether amounting to breach of law or not provided it creates maximum embarrassment and obstruction to administration. Obvious grievances mentioned in Working Committee's resolution of July 10th afford best grounds for successful movement so far as they are genuine but Provincial Governments must be prepared for all kinds of passive resistance before and after arrest and in jail.¹²⁵

The Working Committee's Resolution of 10 July had demanded prompt redress of popular grievances and hardships due to war-efforts of the government: 'orders for evacuation of villages, lands and buildings without due notice and proper compensation, seizure and destruction of country-boats, even where life is impossible without them, requisition of vehicles without proper compensation and regard for needs of civil population'. Another point of interest for millions of poor people was also raised in this Resolution of 10 July: 'In view of scarcity of salt and apprehended famine of it due to war conditions, facilities should be provided for collection, preparation and transport of salt on sea coast and in inland areas free of duty by individuals. People may manufacture salt for their own and their cattle's consumption.'¹²⁶ This meant that the Working Committee envisaged the possibility of people defying the salt laws, and of linking salt and satyagraha once again in the history of Gandhian agitation against British rule. The Government of India instructed the provincial governments on 2 August that, in their plan of campaign against the Congress, the first stage providing for anti-Congress propaganda to prepare public opinion in India and abroad in favour of strong repressive action was nearing completion. Unless the AICC unambiguously removed the threat of a mass movement by amending the CWC's Quit India Resolution, the second stage of Government action would begin with the arrest of Gandhi and the CWC members under the Defence of India Rule 26; the banning not of the Indian National Congress as whole, but of the CWC, the AICC, the PCC, other Congress Committees or committees affiliated to the Congress, including those of the Congress Socialist Party, by orders issued by the provincial governments, under the Criminal Law Amendment Act; the immediate seizure of relevant offices and funds, and arrest under the Defence of India Rule 26 of all such Congressmen who were considered competent and likely to organize and launch mass movement. No action against the Communist Party, many of whose members were still formally within the Congress organization, was contemplated.¹²⁷ On 23 July, the Government of India had made an

announcement that the release of Communists from jail would be accelerated, and that the ban on the Communist Party [and their party organs, the *National Front* and the *New Age*, also] was removed, in view of the recent announcements and circulars of the Communist Party of India to their party members indicating a change of front and declaring their intention to throw the party's energies into the task of cooperating with the existing war effort in India. The Government of India welcomed these statements of intention made by the Communist Party and their recognition of the current War as 'a people's war'. The Provincial Governments were to review each case of imprisonment or detention of Communists on merits and 'not excluding from review the cases of members of the Communist Party who as such have been convicted by criminal courts of offences involving violence.'¹²⁸

Another step taken by the British Government to strengthen the friends of the government in their war-effort, in the first stage of the anti-Congress campaign, was the expansion of the Viceroy's Council announced on 2 July. Membership of the council was increased to fifteen 'to associate representative Indian opinion' more closely in the conduct of government and the war; a Membership of Defence was created and Sir Feroze Khan Noon was nominated Defence Member; the principle of providing representation to Sikhs, Depressed Classes, and Non-official Europeans on a communal basis was another significant feature introduced in the expansion of the Viceroy's Council. The governor-general could expect from his council valuable support in executing the policy of toughness against the Congress.

The new council did not object to the publication for general information on 5 August morning of the text of the Note on the proceedings of the Congress Working Committee from 27 April to 1 May 1942 at Allahabad recorded by an Assistant Secretary of the AICC and seized by the police in their raid on the AICC office at Allahabad on 26 May 1942. At the same time, Draft No. 1, dated Allahabad 27 April 1942 (Gandhiji's draft sent to Allahabad through Mira Ben which later came into the hands of the police), and the text of the AICC resolution dated 1 May 1942, were published by the government. The inference of Jawaharlal's statements in the 'proceedings' now published was that Gandhi's belief was that Japan and Germany would win the war. In a press interview at Bombay on 5 August, Gandhi said that the Draft sent by him through Mira Ben to the Working Committee was in no way a finished product; that there was a deliberate omission from his draft as to the foreign policy of the Congress (foreign matters being a subject in which he usually obtained inspiration and knowledge from Pandit Nehru); and that he (Gandhi) had never even in a most unguarded moment expressed the opinion that Japan and Germany would win this war. Gandhi

had often said in the *Harijan* that Germany and Japan could not win the war, if only Great Britain would once for all shed her imperialism, and that in the Congress view it was the refusal of Great Britain to declare Indian independence which prevented the Congress from supporting the British war-effort. As for the sentence about negotiation with Japan found in his draft, Gandhi said it had always been his way of doing satyagraha to send gentle notice or entreaty to the other party to do the right thing before coming into conflict: 'if India became an independent nation tomorrow and I was witness to the grand phenomenon, I would certainly advise and plead with the provisional government to send me — old as I am — to Japan and I would plead with her in the first instead [instance?] to free China.' To the public and the press in Great Britain and in the United States who were unfamiliar with the satyagraha procedure and working of the Mahatma and the Congress, the disclosure of these Congress documents produced amazement and distrust of Gandhi and the Congress leadership. The nationalist press in India was no less astonished, but the general impression in political lobbies in New Delhi was that the publication of the 'Allahabad Documents' was another Zinoviev Letter to beat down the Congress on the eve of the fateful AICC meeting in Bombay.¹²⁹

7. The Quit India Resolution

The reasons that impelled the Congress to raise the slogan, 'Quit India', were freshly explained by Jawaharlal and Shankarrao Deo addressing, a big public meeting at Parel in Bombay on 5 August morning. 'I wish to repudiate,' declared Jawaharlal, 'that I am not in favour of the "Quit India" movement. I am not only wholly in favour of it but have been actually advocating it for a number of years now. My only concern was in regard to the Allied forces in India as their withdrawal would have meant the opening of the doors to Japan. Mahatma Gandhi has accepted this view.' The enthusiasm of the people could not be whipped up to defend freedom, freedom being something of which they had no knowledge in India under the British rule. The danger of a new foreign aggression had raised a question of life and death not only for the Congress but for the entire country; and the spirit of resistance to foreign domination, which patriots had nurtured for many years past by demanding freedom as their birthright, had to be strengthened quickly and greatly by inviting not only Congressmen, but all the men and women of India, to participate in a new movement led by Gandhiji for winning Independence. 'The forthcoming meeting of the A.I.C.C. is going to be the most momentous and important session during the last quarter of a century. The Working Committee has taken a decision that this country should no longer live in slavery and that a struggle for freedom should be launched.'¹³⁰

On the same day, 5 August, the Working Committee meeting in Bombay adopted a resolution restating *de novo* the Quit India demand and making a last-minute appeal to Great Britain and the United Nations to free India and make Free India an ally:

But the Committee feels that it is no longer justified in holding the nation back from endeavouring to assert its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government which dominates over it and prevents it from functioning in its own interest and in the interest of humanity. The Committee resolves, therefore, to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilise all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last twenty-two years of peaceful struggle. Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken.

The Resolution of 5 August repeated the Congress view of the objectives of free India's foreign policy. The main points were: first, an alliance with the United Nations for resisting aggression effectively; second, freedom of all other Asiatic nations under foreign domination, namely Burma, Malaya, Indo-China, the Dutch Indies, Iran and Iraq; third, a World Federation of free nations, developed by the United Nations, for the future peace, security and ordered progress of the world; and fourth, the disarmament of nations under the auspices of a World Federation.

A Provisional composite government, to be formed by the principal parties and groups in India upon a declaration of the withdrawal of British power, would have as its primary functions the defence of India with all the armed as well as the non-violent forces at its command together with its Allied powers, and the promotion of 'the well-being and progress of the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere to whom essentially all power and authority must belong'. Regarding the future constitution of India, the resolution of 5 July, reiterated the Working Committee's view that the constitution should be acceptable to all sections of the people, and that it should be a federal one with a new and significant rider (obviously introduced to please the Muslims who supported autonomy of Bengal and the Punjab), 'with the largest measure of autonomy for the federating units, and with the residuary powers vesting in these units'.¹³¹

The United Nations did not respond publicly to the Working Committee's appeal to them but on 6 August, at London, Sir Stafford Cripps made a declaration that His Majesty's Government stood firmly by the broad intentions of their offer made in the Draft Declaration which Cripps had taken to India, and that they reiterated their resolve 'to give

the fullest opportunity for the attainment by India of self-government'. Sir Stafford said it was not reasonable for the people of India, while hostilities were continuing, to demand some complete and fundamental constitutional change. The same argument in support of the *status quo* in India appeared in the British and American Press in the first week of August. Of the British-owned newspapers in India, none was more influential in the European community in eastern and northern India than the *Statesman* of Calcutta; on 5 August it greatly displeased the Government of India by suggesting in a leader that the government were at fault and that the British public might not be fully informed of the Indian situation made deplorable by the 'obstinate attitude' of the Government and 'the corresponding crime of the Congress'.¹³² Two days later, a piece of news pleased Congressmen: Gandhiji published the text of the 'Puckle Circular' dated 17 July 1942 addressed to the chief secretaries in the provinces and the chief commissioners of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Baluchistan and Coorg, detailing instructions for anti-Congress propaganda in view of Gandhi's Quit India movement. In a brief introductory remark to the text, Gandhiji said that secret Government circulars of this sort were an additional reason for the cry of Quit India which came from the aching hearts of millions of Indian people. He added: 'let the masses know that there are many other ways of earning a living than betraying national interest'.¹³³

The Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and Yusuf Meherally, the Mayor of Bombay, spared no pains in making elaborate arrangements for the AICC's historic Bombay session of August 1942. Some three thousand volunteers were employed to keep order in the huge pandal into which about ten thousand persons, including 250 AICC members, sat crowded in eager expectation of seeing and hearing the Mahatma and the great leaders, and some five thousand overflowed outside in spite of the sultry weather, when the session began on 7 August with the usual Congress ceremonies and patriotic song.¹³⁴

In his speech opening the proceedings, Maulana Azad reviewed the developments since the Allahabad Session of May 1942 and explained the Congress stand stated in the Working Committee's resolutions of 14 July and 5 August. Congress sympathies were with the United Nations and Great Britain and not with the Nazi and Fascist powers and Japan; the Congress attitude towards Japan threatening an invasion of India was one of active resistance and not of passive non-resistance; Congress resolutions had suggested, rather appealed, to Great Britain and the United Nations that, in their avowed war for making freedom and democracy safe in the world, they declare the independence of India and take nationalist India's wholehearted alliance, the honourable collaboration of free men and not politically enslaved people supplying to Great Britain at cheap cost first-class mercenaries and essential mili-

tary supplies. The right to freedom and independence of India needed fresh popular assertion in 1942 in a manner more emphatic than the Individual Satyagraha of 1940-1, the non-embarrassment policy of which appeared to have had no great effect on the Government of India's hostility towards Indian nationalists.

After Azad had explained the Congress Working Committee's Quit India Resolution, the supreme leader invited to guide the proposed Quit India movement of the Congress, Mahatma Gandhi, then addressed the AICC in Hindi. 'I may tell you that I am the same man today that I was in 1920. The only difference is that I am much stronger in certain things now than what I was in 1920.' He stuck to the principle of non-violence as before; if the AICC were tired of it then they need not go with him in the fight.

Another point I want to impress upon you is your great responsibility. Members of the AICC are like members of a parliament. The Congress represents the whole of India. The Congress from its very inception has not been of any particular group or any particular colour or caste or of any particular province. It has claimed, ever since its birth, to represent the whole nation and on your behalf I have made the claim that you represent not only the registered members of the Congress but the entire nation.

The Congress represented the people in Indian India also; the Indian princes would get more through the coming Gandhian struggle than they could ever expect. Congressmen had shown their ability in administration in seven provinces, before the war broke out; the constructive work of the Congress would not finish with the attainment of freedom. 'Our object is to achieve independence and whoever can take up the reins [of government] may do so'. 'The entire atmosphere will change when we get independence.' The mind of the common people did not differentiate between the Britisher and the imperialistic form of their government in India; the hatred of Great Britain was in the minds of many, and there were people who did not mind the advent of the Japanese. 'But it is a dangerous thing. You must remove it from your mind.' This was a crucial hour; if the Congress kept quiet and did not play their part, it would not be right on their part. 'We shall get out freedom by fighting. It cannot fall from the skies. I know fully well that Britishers will have to give us freedom when we have made sufficient sacrifices and proved our strength.' Congressmen should remove hatred from their hearts.

This is my claim at which many people may laugh, but all the same I say that this is true. At a time when I am about to launch the biggest fight in my life there can be no hatred for the British in my heart. The thought that because they are in difficulties I should give them a push is totally absent from my mind. It has never been there. It may be that in a moment of anger

they might do things which might provoke you. Nevertheless, you should not resort to violence and put non-violence to shame. When such a thing happens you may take it that you will not find me alive, wherever I may be. Their blood will be on your head. If you don't understand this, it would be better if you reject this resolution.

If this campaign would really end, as Sardar Patel was reported to have said, in a week, it would be a miracle, said Gandhi. If that happened, it would mean the melting of British hearts and a dawning of wisdom in their mind: 'They will understand it to be wrong for them to put in jail the very people who want to fight for them.' It might be that a change might come in Mr Jinnah's mind too. 'After all, he will think that those who are fighting are the sons of the soil and if he sits quiet, of what use would Pakistan be for him?' If the people of India wanted real freedom, they would have come together and thereby created the real or a true type of democracy he envisaged. 'My democracy means that everyone is his own master.' Neither the French nor the Russian Revolution appeared to Gandhi as an experiment on a scale as large as India's for the establishment of democracy by non-violence. 'When I raised the slogan 'Quit India', people in India who were then feeling despondent felt that I had placed before them a new thing.' The resolution before the AICC said that Indians did not want to remain frogs in a well, and that they were aiming at world federation. Such a federation and disarmament could only be gained through non-violence. 'I want you to adopt non-violence as a matter of policy. With me it is a creed, but so far as you are concerned I want you to accept it as a policy.'

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru then rose, amidst cheers, to move formally the main resolution. If Britain had done the right thing by India in the past two years, the course of history and of the war would have been different. 'The fact is patent to me that the British Government and, for certain, the Government of India, think the Indian National Congress to be enemy No. 1.' The Congress were demanding freedom for India from the British rule and some newspapers in America were calling that blackmail. 'It is a curious charge for a people to make who themselves had for generations carried on a struggle for freedom.' The war had produced great emotional reactions in people's minds which made it very difficult for people not to think in terms of hatred. The Government of India had set up a National War Front: 'there was neither the nation, nor the war, nor any front in it'; all that this front did was to oppose the Congress. 'The only occasion when it [the Government of India] does function effectively and efficiently is when overnight it starts rounding up large numbers of people. One of these days such efficient functioning will reappear against Congressmen.' He would not collaborate with such a government, nor would he remain a passive spectator of the great

happenings that were taking place in the world. The Quit India Resolution was not a narrow nationalist resolution. 'I am proud of Indian nationalism because it is broadbased and has an international background.' The British withdrawal from India would mean, said Jawaharlal, the promotion of world freedom, in its meaning for world history.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel seconded the Quit India Resolution with a powerful speech. It was an idle dream, said the Sardar, for Indians to think in terms of world government without having one at home to call their own. India was asking Britain to quit India at a crucial moment, but it was an abominable lie and a calumny when people accused Congress of inviting the Japanese to invade India.

Congress has been forced to ask the British to leave for the simple reason that they have proved incapable of defending any of their Asian territories. Is it not absurd for them to say that they can defend our country without the willing co-operation of the people? There might be many other reasons for their defeats in Malaya and Singapore, but the fundamental reason was the people's indifference to the war.

What did the British do in Burma? 'Did the British tarry long there to discuss and debate as to whom should power be handed over?' What were the British likely to do in case of a Japanese invasion of India? 'They will run away and we, the sons of the soil will be left behind to suffer. We know by experience that the time has come when we cannot rely on Britain to defend us; we must free ourselves and defend ourselves.' Some people were crying that this War was a people's war.

Of course it is a people's war in Russia and China; it is a war in defence of democracy for the British and the Americans. But is it so in India? If it is, what prevents Britain from applying the principle of democracy to India and making it a people's war? The fact is that in the British view India must accept their war as her own and help them to win it without questioning why.

Turning to the reporters' desk where the British and American journalists were sitting, Sardar Patel said: 'Remember what happened when France fell before the Nazi onslaught? Did Mr Churchill stop to think if it was the right moment to offer the French Common Citizenship with the British?' That offer to the French people was indeed a stroke of imaginative statesmanship on the part of Churchill, said Patel. 'But when it comes to India? Oh, no. Constitutional changes in the midst of the war? Absolutely unthinkable. How can you change horses in midstream?' The Sardar seemed to answer well questions put by the critics of Congress policy; Jawaharlal and Kripalani were seen congratulating Patel on his speech, while thousands roared in approval. Sardar Patel exhorted

the AICC and the people of India to carry on the struggle and to take the initiative in the event of the Mahatma and other leaders being arrested by the police.¹³⁵

Behind the scenes on 7 August, Gandhiji prepared a confidential draft (for Working Committee Members only) of instructions for the guidance of civil resisters. This draft was placed before the Working Committee and discussed on 8 August; it would have been again before the Committee on the morning of 9 August, if the Committee had not been arrested at dawn on that day.¹³⁶

Gandhi's Draft Instructions called for a day of hartal and twenty-four hours' fast, and prayers by all the people. In the cities, no processions and meetings were to be held on that day.

In the villages, however, where there is no fear of violence or disturbance, meetings may be held and processions taken out and responsible Congressmen who believe in mass Civil Disobedience should explain the meaning of the contemplated Satyagraha struggle to the people. The object of our Satyagraha is to secure the withdrawal of British Rule and the attainment of independence for the whole of India.

All Congressmen should make it clear to the people that the Government of Free India would not belong to the Congress nor to any particular group or party or community, but to the entire 35 crores of the people of India. 'It should also be well explained that this Satyagraha is not directed against Englishmen but against British Rule only for we regard no one as our enemy. This should be brought home to villagers.' Reports about the hartal and other activities were to be sent to the central Congress office through provincial Congress committees. In case the leader of satyagraha in a particular place was arrested by the government, another should be chosen in his place, and every province was expected to make necessary arrangements suited to its particular circumstances. 'In the last resort, every Congressman is his own leader and a servant of the whole nation. A final word: No one should think that those whose names are on the Congress register are the only Congressmen.' The Draft Instructions by Gandhi warned that the cause would be hindered if individuals who were not free from the spirit of communalism or ill-will against Englishmen joined the proposed struggle; such individuals would best help the struggle by keeping aloof. This document shows that Gandhiji was moving with determination but with caution, with hartals, prayers and fasts, in his civil disobedience plan of 1942.

The AICC proceedings on the afternoon of 8 August 1942 were, as expected, marked by several amendments both from Congressmen and Communists, and these were given curt treatment. Congress speakers,

notably T. Prakasam, Rammanohar Lohia, A.S. Patwardhan and Pandit Nekiram criticized the amendments moved by the Communists: K.M. Ashraf, Sajjad Zaheer and S.G. Sardesai, who did not favour the Quit India movement. In the end, Jawaharlal himself applied the *coup de grace* to these amendments, by a speech exposing the fallacies of the Communist demand for Hindu-Muslim unity as first priority at that hour. He had tried for one whole year, but he was unable to understand what the League wanted. He was told during the Cripps mission negotiations that a certain leader insisted on behalf of the Muslims that the viceroy's power of veto should not be removed or in any way qualified. The Congress were told that they could not send Muslims to represent the Congress in negotiations; the chief difficulty in negotiations with the League was that the problem was more political than communal. It was wrong to say that the Muslim masses of India were reactionary. 'The Sudeten crisis bears similarity here.' Congress knocked themselves against a wall in negotiations with the League. 'Are we going to be kicked about by men who have made no sacrifice for the freedom of India and who can never think in terms of freedom at all?' In the first part of his speech Jawaharlal emphasized that Congress were in dead earnest about Indian independence. 'People talk to us from Washington, New York and various other places. You know what Japan is. We know what subjection is and we know it better than Americans and Englishmen.' Indian freedom could change the whole nature of the war. It was wrong for people in the west to look at every question from the narrow standpoint of a soldier, and to talk much of racial superiority of the Anglo-Saxons, Germans or the Italians, and to forget that there were other races also in this world. Those amendments which were not withdrawn secured only 12 votes, and the main resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority, only 13 members (of whom 12 were Communists and the thirteenth was said to be 'the father of a communist') voting against it.

Mahatma Gandhi then addressed the AICC, calling upon them and the Indian people to begin to feel that they were free men, not slaves of an empire. He would make every effort to see the viceroy before starting the struggle. Teachers and students should be ready to join the struggle; Indian newspapers should stop publication till independence was achieved; government servants should write to the government to say that they were with the Congress; as for the princes, they should act wisely while Gandhi was alive. When he was gone, Jawaharlal would have no patience with them. The Congress had committed no crime in demanding Indian independence without further delay, and Great Britain and America had an opportunity of a lifetime to declare India free and discharge their overdue debt to India. 'I know what freedom is. English teachers have taught me its meaning. I must interpret that

freedom according to what I can see and what I have experienced.' He did not claim that every Congressman conformed to the highest principle of non-violence even as a policy: 'I know that there are many black sheep; but I am trusting them, in general without subjecting them to an examination. It is this fundamental trust that rules my life. From its very beginning the Congress in its fundamental policy — which is to bring about Swaraj — has been non-violent'. He was asking the British Government to quit India, but that did not mean enmity towards the British people. 'At the present moment the spirit of [the Rev. C.F.] Andrews is sweeping me and Andrews seems to me to be the highest that I have known in the English.' Gandhiji declared that he must go ahead with his struggle, not for India's sake alone but for the sake of the world. And it was a moment when Gandhiji could not suppress the voice within him. 'Call it conscience, call it by anything you like; call it the promptings of my basic nature; I do not mind how you describe it but there is something there'. The time for starting his last big struggle for Indian Independence had arrived: 'That voice tells me that I shall have to fight against the whole world and stand alone; it also tells me "You are safe so long as you can stare the world in the face, although the world may have blood-shot eyes"'. Gandhiji wound up his memorable statement to the AICC on 8 August 1942 with a call for Hindu-Muslim amity. Speaking in Hindustani, he declared his belief that India was the homeland of Indian Muslims and that Islam did not teach one to abuse others. 'Mr Jinnah had been a Congressman in the past. He seems now to be misguided. I pray long life for him and wish that he may survive me. A day will certainly dawn when he will realise that I have never wronged him or the Muslims.' Congress stood for India's freedom, freedom for all and not for any particular community. 'I wholeheartedly endorse the Maulana Sahib's offer to the British that India be handed over to any community. I would not be sorry if the authority is transferred to the Muslim masses.' In concluding the AICC session on that night of 8 August 1942, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad reminded the vast audience that the passing of the Quit India Resolution by the AICC at Bombay had only initiated the new mass campaign for independence and that the people themselves must carry it to a successful end.¹³⁷

Rumours of impending arrests of Congressmen and of Gandhi were current in Bombay during the AICC session, and it was known that Congress leaders had friends in the police service also, who could warn them of warrants being prepared.¹³⁸ Thousands of Congressmen and Congress sympathizers who went home late at night after the session had heard from the Mahatma's lips the memorable words: 'If the lustre is to be put into these [40 crores of Indian people] lustreless eyes, I tell you that freedom has to come today. For that freedom I have pledged the Congress and the Congress has pledged her share that "it will do or it will die".'

A *Gazette Extraordinary* published by the Bombay Government on Sunday, 9 August 1942, said that, in exercise of the powers conferred by the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908, the government was pleased to notify the organizations known as the All India Congress Committee, the Congress Working Committee, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee or the Gujarat Provincial Congress Satyagraha Committee, the Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee and the Karnataka Provincial Congress Satyagraha Committee to be unlawful associations. Places used for the purposes of these unlawful associations were notified, at the same time. The same *Gazette* published an order that, in exercise of the Defence of India Rules, the government was pleased to direct that: '(a) no public procession, meeting or assembly shall be held in any place in the Province of Bombay, except with the previous permission in writing of the District Magistrate of the district concerned or the Commissioner of Police, Bombay as the case may be, and (b) no person shall take part in any procession, meeting or assembly in respect of which such permission has not been obtained.'¹³⁹

Except in the North-West Frontier Province, provincial governments issued repressive orders against the Congress organizations in their respective areas and the police started detaining the 'tall poppies' in jails, seizing the Congress committee premises and funds, and enforcing prohibitory orders against unauthorized processions or assemblies in towns. In Bombay, the governor had already alerted all collectors that the government would go all out to defeat the Quit India movement and instructed them to make this clear to their subordinates. As for the round-up of leaders in Bombay:

Zero hour was fixed at 5.00 a.m. The Commissioner of Police and Rao Bahadur Desai effected Gandhi's arrest. He displayed his usual courtesy and gave no trouble at all. The only piece of trouble was occasioned by Pant, who appears to have been angry at being woken up so early and gave some trouble, with the result that he did not get to the station in time to catch the special train. Everything else went according to plan, and at 7.15 a.m. the special train, with Gandhi and the Working Committee, and about forty of our own Congress leaders, was on its way. . . . With the exception of a scene created by Yusuf Meherally, who is decidedly unbalanced, all went well up to Chinchawad, a small station short of Poona, at which Gandhi and those destined for Yeravada Jail alighted. After that, there was an unfortunate incident when the train, which now contained only the Working Committee, passed through Poona. It was not intended to stop at Poona Station, but the signal was against the train. This matter is under enquiry. A small crowd of students were waiting on the platform. Nehru and Shankarrao Deo climbed through the corridor window but were stopped by the D.I.G. and an unpleasant scene, with Nehru and Deo

beside themselves with rage, followed. Apart from this incident, the Working Committee reached Ahmednagar safely.

The general trend of conversation among the leaders on the train journey indicated that they were taken by surprise and did not expect to be arrested so soon after the AICC meeting. Many AICC members were arrested at Bombay or on their way home. The pandal erected for the AICC on the maidan at Gowalia Tank, Bombay, and the premises known as Congress House situated at Vithalbhai Patel Road, including all the buildings such as Dadabhoy Manzil, Vithal Sadan, Sarojini Cottage and Jinnah Hall situated in the compound, and the funds of the AICC and Bombay PCC were seized by the police.¹⁴⁰

The news of the arrest of Gandhi and the Congress leaders spread quickly, and from the morning of 9 August the police in the Bombay City had to use their lathis and guns, to maintain law and order and to guard government and railway properties against angry youth and mobs. The police opened fire at 15 places in the city on 9 August; on 10 August they fired on crowds on 26 occasions, killing sixteen persons; on the following day, they fired on 13 occasions, killing six. Bombay was the storm centre, in the first few days. The country was stunned by the sudden arrests of Mahatma Gandhi and national leaders and the orders declaring Congress organizations unlawful. The British Government appeared to have insulted the nation and challenged the masses to show how earnest they were in their cry for *swaraj*, for freedom from British rule.

8. The Quit India Struggle

The morning newspapers of 9 August carried the Government of India's resolution rejecting the Quit India demand and announcing that in the past few days government had information of Congressmen planning for serious disturbances in the country.¹⁴¹ Because of severe restrictions on the press, imposed from 9 August, only the Government of India in the Home Department at New Delhi could obtain a fair idea of the law and order situation produced by their 'beheading' and other measures to 'abort' or paralyse the Congress-inspired Quit India movement in the following weeks. 'So far as the news that has reached us here has only been of clashes in Bombay, Poona and Ahmedabad, with some firing by troops as well as police and apparently ten killed or died of wounds,' wrote Amery to Linlithgow from the India Office on 10 August. The Secretary of State hoped that the Government of India should get through in the main with police action and with occasional employment of security troops. 'What I am certain of is that if the thing had been allowed to gather momentum our whole military dispositions might easily have been disorganised.'¹⁴² On 8 August, he had found that in the

matter of dealing with the Congress and its Quit India movement, the Cabinet were 'all perfectly sound, none sounder than Bevin who hitherto next to Cripps, has been most inclined to favour Congress.' Cripps had suddenly suggested on 7 August that the viceroy should issue a last moment declaration welcoming the idea of a meeting between Congress and other parties as suggested by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru on 25 July, and offering to give serious consideration 'to any conclusions that emerged from such a meeting'. Amery assured Linlithgow that the Cabinet on 8 August had concluded that the one thing essential was promptitude of action and that to ensure this the viceroy might even have to take the responsibility on his own shoulders, though they felt confident that the viceroy would carry his Executive with him, however wobbly individual members might be behind the scenes, in suppressing the Quit India movement and the threat of a possible hunger-strike by Gandhi.¹⁴³

In his situation report of 12 August, Linlithgow said that the government were doing very well, though there was 'a good deal of quite subordinate damage to property, rioting, occasional molestation etc', and that the only area in which there had been trouble that mattered was Bombay Presidency. On 13 August, Linlithgow reported: 'There are indications that troubles to date have been spontaneous reactions to arrest of Gandhi & Co. and that Congress may be planning a more formal opening of the civil disobedience movement throughout the country.' The only incident of any seriousness reported from provinces was an attack by mob at a railway station at Tenali (in the Madras Presidency) which cut communications, looted goods-sheds and burnt two trains. Students continued to give trouble in various places, and there were still evidences of strain in industrial areas such as Lucknow, Kanpur, Bombay, Nagpur, and Ahmedabad. In Bombay, the riot situation was very much easier by 14 August, and 59 mills in Bombay were working wholly or partially; in Nagpur there had been fairly serious rioting; at Kanpur a goods train was derailed without casualties; at Delhi, quiet was restored after two days of a good deal of trouble with rather heavy casualties and damage to property. 'General impression left on me is that main elements now concerned in causing difficulty (probably more now under Congress direction than was the case earlier) are: (a) students; (b) hooligans. Mill element is dropping out.' Nagpur was quiet, but there had been a serious riot in Ramtek a town outside, said the situation report dated 15 August.

¹⁴³ Slight deterioration in the United Provinces, where Allahabad situation has passed beyond student stage and become a hooligan case, and also in Calcutta and Dacca, where there have been disturbances necessitating firing. Only new and serious feature is a large scale attempt to interrupt

communication on railway on either side of Patna (a district notorious for its train-wrecking history even in peacetime) by large scale removal of rails, burning of rail sleepers on bridges, etc and cutting of telegraph wires.

After consulting General Hartley, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, the Governor-General authorized machine-gunning from air of saboteurs.¹⁴⁴

On 16 August, in his report to Amery, Linlithgow said:

Storm centre appears to be Bihar where a serious situation has developed around Patna owing to widespread sabotage of Railway lines and cuttings of communications. Troop dispositions have been made, and communication by wireless has been re-established with the Governor. Everything is being done to re-establish the position, but it may take some little time to do so, in view of the widespread damage that has been caused. There are signs of reactions to the Bihar position in the Eastern Districts of the United Provinces, Benares and Allahabad, which border on it. Basis of organisation of Bihar disturbance not yet quite clear. Students, particularly basing themselves on Benares Hindu University, with hooligans, appear to be responsible in the Eastern United Provinces, the rest of which province is at present reported in good order.

Students and hooligans remained responsible for some difficulty in Calcutta; there were scattered troubles in the Central Provinces in which students were prominent. In Calcutta, some organized sabotage indicating technical knowledge of electrical distribution was reported on 17 August, and the situation remained unsatisfactory in the Banaras area where Banaras Hindu University was stated to be the focus of sabotage and railway dacoity organization. Widely scattered minor incidents of varying importance were reported, but viewing the country as a whole, the situation was generally satisfactory. In a private and personal letter dated 17 August, Linlithgow wrote to Amery:

What does emerge pretty clearly, as I said in my appreciation of today, is that had we not struck as swiftly and as decisively as we did we might have found ourselves faced with an extremely awkward situation, wholly revolutionary in character, well organised by people working underground and deterred by no considerations of non-violence or the like. I think that we are fortunate to have tidied up the Bombay position as well as we have, and I am relieved also that things should now be quiet in Delhi, for serious and prolonged rioting in the capital city of a country is not a very good advertisement, whatever the reasons may be for it. I am not a great deal bothered about the position in Bengal, though I may have cause to revise that view in the next day or two, for the trouble is confined so far as one can judge essentially to Calcutta and Dacca, both of them important university towns, and the excitable and emotional character of the Bengali student

may well make him, if he once gets at all worked up, most dangerous material for agitators of a more sinister character.

But so far even in Bengal things seemed not too bad, said the viceroy.¹⁴⁵

It was reported on 18 August that the situation in Sind was completely restored to normal, and in the Central Provinces (apart from murder of two Indian officers) the situation was rapidly approaching normal. Except for 'misbehaviour' of students, there was little further trouble in Madras City; things were not improving in the districts of the Madras Presidency where a number of cases of interference with communications occurred and a serious riot in one place. 'Hindu nationalist papers in Bengal have decided to suspend publication from August 21st as protest against Press restrictions. It has still to be seen whether Congress sympathisers are subsidising serious financial loss which must be involved.' There was improvement in Patna town and the neighbourhood, but in the surrounding districts the situation was still serious: 'extensive damage reported to communications, post offices, railway stations and occasionally police stations and governor anxious about safety of Europeans in outlying districts, while staunchness of Constabulary stated to be questionable in Saran District to which troops being sent from Patna 17th.' On 19 August, Bhagalpur was reported out of hand and the situation in Bihar north of the Ganga still grave. In the United Provinces, the Banaras Hindu University had been occupied without trouble, but in the eastern area there had been 'serious attacks on outlying police stations apparently with brutal murder at Ghazipur of local Indian police staff'. The continued interference with railway lines between Allahabad and Banaras was a serious feature and sabotage had been preconcerted and cleverly planned. 'Central Provinces: two cases of attacks on outlying stations held by small bodies of Indian policemen who have been murdered and their bodies burned. Details still lacking, in one case victims stated to have been offered their lives if they promised to join Congress and resign Government service.' In Bengal, Calcutta was comparatively quiet, unrest continued in Dacca. In Bombay, some disorder and uneasiness in districts, and some tension in Ahmedabad. There were a large number of scattered incidents, some of them serious, in the mofussil in the Madras Presidency; the governor reported that acts of violence and sabotage at Madura were most determined and well-organized. There were signs of disturbances spreading into the districts, and the governor of the United Provinces commented on difficulty of preventing this owing to dispersal of students. 'These murders of subordinate Indian policemen accompanied by destruction of police posts in Central Provinces and United Provinces are a significant and most unpleasant feature of situation, and emphasize complete impracticability of main-

taining non-violent character of movement such as this when Congress has advised its followers to think for themselves in the absence of leaders.' On this day, 19 August, Linlithgow sent to the British prime minister acknowledgement to his telegram of encouragement, and in it the viceroy expressed his good hope that 'we may clear up the position before either Jap or German is well placed to put direct pressure upon us'. Linlithgow would offer to Churchill India as 'a sound platform' for future military operations in any direction.¹⁴⁶

Linlithgow's appreciation of the situation, dated 20 August, mentioned that there were two or three incidents in Orissa; that the situation in Bengal was much as before; and that there was no news from Assam. In Bihar, Kodarma station was raided by mob of 500 with Congress flags at Mokameh, rioters were in possession of arms and ammunition suspected to have been obtained from a looted train; in Bhagalpur and Santal Parganas, the situation was still serious and reported to have deteriorated. In Madras: 'Some bad patches in mofussil concentrated in two or three areas, viz. (a) Ramnad, Madura and Tanjore districts; (b) Guntur, Kistna and Godavari districts, in which governor describes attacks that have been made, interference with communications, etc. as having been really violent revolutionary outbreaks.' Attacks on communications and sporadic incidents were still reported in the following days from various parts of the country, but on the whole the situation was much easier except in Bihar, the only trouble-centre of first class importance. The situation report dated 23 August said that, in Bihar

A predominant part in sabotage is now being played by the type of villager who ordinarily indulges in mischief and loot rather than by the students who had been very prominent in earlier incidents. Two murders of officials have been reported, one of a Sub-Inspector of Police, and one of a constable. The former after defending his police station with singular courage and determination was eventually overwhelmed by the mob which proceeded to make a bonfire of furniture, etc. and burned him on it alive.

In the United Provinces, the police was definitely on top in eastern areas. Strikes and demonstrations continued in many districts in Bengal, but Calcutta was normal except for leaflets. There was a derailment in the Punjab, and considerable interference with communications in the Mysore State. The police had to fire at Bangalore, where the Hindustan Aircraft Factory and other industrial units were still on strike. In Baroda, where there had been some trouble and military had to fire, was now quieter.

The situation report of 24 August said that improvement over British India was definitely marked, though Kanpur had a serious riot, students' strikes and demonstrations continued in Bengal districts, and

there were reports of renewed interference with communications in Madras districts and of minor incidents from various districts in Bombay. In Bihar: 'Officer and four men of the Yorks and Lancs Regiment killed at Marhowrah near Chapra were apparently overcome after some 40 people killed by their fire.' The report of following day, 25 August, said that parts of the Cuttack district in Orissa were still disturbed, and firing was necessary in Koraput to deal with a violent mob intent on burning the police station; and that a police party was reported murdered on the Fyzabad-Pratabgarh road in the United Provinces, which was on the whole generally quiet. Improvement continued, said the report of 26 August in which the most serious fresh incident noted was destruction by fire (suspected sabotage) of the Kashmir Government silk weaving factory producing parachute silk. The viceroy's appreciation of 28 August said that in Assam there was slight deterioration, in Bengal students' strikes and demonstrations and interferences with communications continued, in Bihar the report of a murder of a sub-divisional officer and inspector of police with one head-constable and two orderlies at Sitamarhi had been confirmed. On 29 August, the viceroy reported: 'situation settling down pretty steadily, though we shall continue to get widely scattered minor incidents and interferences with communications &c.' On 30 August, he advised all provincial governors; 'it would be well, given Cabinet feeling, to close down publicity or public references to whipping as much as possible.' He reported to Amery on 31 August that there were mild incidents in certain districts of the Bombay Presidency, students' demonstrations in Bengal, mopping up operations by troops deployed in Bihar, and one or two incidents of police firing in districts in the United Provinces.¹⁴⁷

Improvement continued in India generally in September and in the following months, though sporadic incidents were mentioned in the viceroy's situation reports. Parts of Bihar remained much disturbed for several weeks. The report dated 1 September said that the situation in Purnea in Bihar was reported to be grave, and aborigines in Santal Parganas were showing signs of unrest; and that in Assam, troops had to fire on mobs on two occasions. 'Burning of some police stations, bungalows and liquor shops reported from various parts of Deoghar in Santal Parganas', said Linlithgow on 2 September. On the following day, he had good news for Amery: 'Jamshedpur (Tata factory) strike settled and all staff, supervisory and other, back at work today.' On 5 September, Linlithgow wrote to Amery:

Bihar is not yet quite tidy. The Bengalees seem to be making themselves a nuisance in the Sylhet Valley and elsewhere in Assam, and I have just seen in Delhi some leaflets urging a further outbreak on the 9th September. We shall have to be very firm with disorder in this country for some time, and

for precisely the reasons you give — that opinion at home may think first that this business has not been so serious as, in fact, it has: and second, that it is now a thing of the past — I am certain that we shall be wise to take any risks involved in giving some publicity to facts which will bring out its true gravity.

In summing up information relating to damage to the railways, the Government of India in the Home Department informed the secretary of state in a report dated 5 September 1942:

It is too early yet to assess full damage but following figures are available for each railway, first of which represents stations damaged and second gives number of derailments. Bengal-Nagpur Railway 4 and 1, Bombay Baroda and C(entral) I(ndia) Railway 11 and 3, B(engal) and A(ssam) 27 and 2, Great Indian Peninsular Railway 8 and 3, Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway 13 and 11, North-Western Railway 4 and 1, Southern India 4 and 3. On East Indian Railway 58 stations damaged and on Bengal and North-Western Railway probably between 150 and 170. Number of derailments on these 2 lines not known. Damage to track and rolling stock very extensive. Apart from [? loss of] earnings which must be very heavy, damage to [? property] must be in neighbourhood of crore of rupees and further information may show this figure to be conservative.

Except on the East Indian Railway and Bengal and North Western Railway, train services were practically normal. Posts and Telegraph communications were particular objects of attacks by mobs. The Government of India reported on 6 September 1942 that out of a total 24,000 Post Offices in India 553 were attacked, 28 burnt down, 237 seriously damaged, and 218 temporarily closed because of the disturbances. Scattered cutting of telegraph and telephone wires still continued. 'Even at worst time of trouble telegraph and telephone communications maintained between principal cities except Patna, either by direct or indirect routes. Present position is — all direct routes re-established except Calcutta-Madras and Calcutta-Delhi which work intermittently.'

An appreciation made by the Government of India's Home and War Departments and reported to the secretary of state on 5 September 1942 said: 'Reports so far received show 65 police stations and posts attacked of which 40 destroyed and some 55 other public buildings attacked of which the great majority destroyed. Latter include many Courts, Treasuries and A.R.P. buildings. These figures are very incomplete and include few from Bihar.' Police opened fire on numerous occasions, over 100 in Bombay alone. Reports of casualties which were exceedingly incomplete and did not include Bihar showed 340 killed and 630 wounded, but true totals would be considerably higher. Police had themselves suffered heavily; 28 deaths had so far been reported.

A feature has been the very wide use of military and excellent co-operation between military and civil. Troops were called out in 60 places in the majority of which they are still out. This does not include very widespread use of troops on guard and railway protection [? duties] nor places where troops stood by. At height of disturbances equivalent of 57 battalions were employed. Military also fired on many occasions, details of casualties caused not yet available but probably less than those caused by the police. Military casualties were 11 killed, 7 wounded. These include 2 Air Force Officers dragged from train and killed by mob and 1 British Officer and 4 British Other Ranks who were ambushed and murdered by mob after putting up stout resistance. Both these incidents occurred in Bihar. Considerable damage was done to military property including interruption of aerodrome construction, destruction and looting of M.E.S. stores M.T. and military stores on railways. Military W.T. communications proved of great value particularly in Bihar where provincial headquarters and other areas were for time completely cut off from the outer world. Full use was also made in Bihar of the R.A.F. for reconnaissance and firing against rail saboteurs from the air was resorted to on two occasions. There was of course no bombing or cannon fire.¹⁴⁸

General improvement continued throughout the country, but the authorities felt that they were not yet out of the woods. There was still a good deal of scattered trouble in North Bihar. The viceroy's situation report dated 10 September said that insurgents in Darbhanga area in Bihar were now in possession of arms and ammunitions brought from looted thanas. In the United Provinces there had been a violent attack on a station in the eastern area; in the Central Provinces there had been one serious case of sabotage and a number of minor incidents. 'Students continue active in various parts of the country and Bengal reports that vicious minority among them is obviously spreading disorder and bad feeling in Calcutta.' In his report covering the period 10-15 September, Linlithgow said: 'Bombay reports that while in general violence has almost disappeared, civil disobedience of a nuisance kind is taking its place: but even, this appears to be on a very limited scale.' His report covering the third week of September said that minor incidents were reported from various parts of the country, and Bihar reports indicated persistence of underground activities. In the following week, Bihar reported reappearance of 'gangsters' and revival of meetings and processions in Saran district, following withdrawal of troops.

On 28 September 1942, a most atrocious incident took place at Eram in Basudevpur police station of Balasore District in Orissa where the police party opened fire against the unarmed villagers and killed 29 people on the spot. That was the most tragic event of the August Revolution in Orissa and probably nowhere in India had so many people been killed in a single police action during the rebellion. Eram, a place near the sea-

shore in South Balasore, remained almost isolated in the rainy season because of natural barriers. The Congress workers there wanted to establish a sort of parallel administration of their own and boycotted the police and other officials in the locality. On the fateful day, a few hundred villagers had assembled in an open space, surrounded on three sides by thorny bushes, muddy fields and ponds. They had gathered on hearing the usual sound of conch-shells to listen to their leaders on the possible course of action against the police and local supporters of the British Raj. A strong police contingent headed by a deputy superintendent of police arrived on the scene and asked the people to disperse. The police had already decided to take strong actions against them because of snatching of the *dak* and also the belongings of a police party. When the people refused to disperse, the police fired several rounds into the thick crowd, killing 29 people on the spot and injuring more than a hundred.

In his report dated 7 October, the viceroy said that Madras spoke of a continued flood of objectionable circulars and leaflets, and that in Bombay there had been a number of incidents in which crude bombs had been used. Ten days later, the viceroy reported that there were many minor incidents throughout Bengal and in other parts of the country. Student activity was reported from several Indian states and from Bengal. 'In the North-West Frontier Province picketing of courts led to disturbances at Mardan and Peshawar'. The next situation report, dated 30 October, mentioned the arrest of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. In his report covering the period 29 October to 6 November, Linlithgow reported that there were train derailments in Bombay, Madras and the United Provinces; and that in Bengal, except in Midnapore District, disturbances were fewer and popular opinion was showing signs of coming round against hooliganism. In the second week of November, sabotage and clashes between mobs and police continued in the Bombay Presidency. 'We must continue to expect underground activity but victory in North Africa is likely to afford relief by suggesting to many that by backing Congress they are not on the winning side and if no Japanese attack occurs, it is probable that the movement will become further discredited and lose still more support.'

The majority of the Ahmedabad mills reopened on 23 November and their full working was expected shortly. In Midnapore District in Bengal, Congress workers were reported to be inciting the population to refuse to accept relief measures organized by government to counter the effects of a recent cyclone or to work on reconstruction of dykes. Other major incidents in the period 17 to 28 November were the derailment by sabotage of a troop train in Assam (four killed, forty injured) and a goods train in the United Provinces. In the first two weeks of December,

owing partly to protective measures, disturbance to communications was reduced; the Midnapore situation was improving though intimidation continued; all the Ahmedabad mills had resumed work, though sporadic bomb incidents continued in the city; and except for a few incidents in Assam and Bihar, the country appeared quiet. Amery's telegram to Linlithgow on the 31 December 1942 said: 'Every possible good wish for 1943 and for a triumphant romp home over the last lap.'¹⁴⁹

In January 1943, the secretary of state noticed that statistics telegraphed direct by the provincial governments to London showed that the total number of persons in jail in connexion with the Congress movement was slightly under 40,000. According to statistics available with the Government of India, on 1 February 1943 there were in jail 22,725 persons convicted under political sections of ordinary law or the Defence of India Rules, 8,130 persons detained under Defence Rule 26, and 4,184 persons temporarily detained under Defence Rule 129.¹⁵⁰ The Government of India were considering the matter of reducing numbers of Congress Security prisoners. Subversive activities had by no means ceased but there had been some decrease in January and February, wrote Linlithgow to Amery on 18 March 1943. Midnapore in Bengal and parts of Bombay Presidency, particularly Belgaum, remained centres of trouble. Derailment of trains were reported from Assam, Bengal, and Bihar; and in the United Provinces and elsewhere there were attacks on isolated railway stations. Wire cutting and arson continued, though on a reduced scale; the use of bombs, however, showed little sign of declining. '152 bomb cases have been reported since January 1st to date, of which 134 were from Bombay.' Many provinces were expanding their police force; the Government of India had done their best to help them with arms and equipment.

We are satisfied that our legal powers are now sufficient to cope with any emergency; special measures adopted since beginning of disturbances include amendment of Special Criminal Courts Ordinance to enable its application to internal disorders; amendment of Collective Fines Ordinance to enable its application for purposes of public safety and order and to enable Provincial Governments to regulate procedure; amendment of Penalties (Enhancement) Ordinance to provide death penalty for attempt to sabotage and for certain offences under Explosive Substances Act, and amendment of Defence of India Rules or introduction of new rules to penalize no-rent campaigns, cutting of telegraph lines or posts, *hartals*, boycott of public servants and to provide for supersession of local authorities who assist the movement.¹⁵¹

On 27 March 1943, Linlithgow informed Amery, that 'Pilditch's opinion is that the country is as quiet as it has been for the last 20 years save for sporadic troubles here and there, e.g. in Belgaum, Midnapore, etc. that

is my own impression.' Once more the viceroy expressed his view that suppression of the Quit India disturbances was made greatly easier for the authorities by the arrests of the Congress leaders on 9 August 1942 and in the following days.¹⁵²

A full appreciation of the Quit India disturbances was sent by the Government of India in the Home Department to the Secretary of State on 5 September 1942. It contained a fair statement of the government's view of Congress responsibility for the disturbances beginning on 9 August 1942.

Our intelligence authorities do not at present see any master hand behind disturbances and attribute them largely to cumulative effect of Anti-British agitation which has been deliberately intensified by Congress leaders since failure of Cripps Mission and partly also to intervention of Congress Socialist Party, forward block [*sic*] and extreme revolutionary parties who are always ready to fish in troubled waters. While we reserve final judgement regarding organisation behind revolt we consider it clear and feel this should be emphasised in debate [in Parliament] that Congress must accept main responsibility even if they have not directly instigated every act of violence that has occurred. We do not exclude the possibility of enemy agency.¹⁵³

In the following weeks, the government did not find any significant participation by enemy agency in the disturbances.¹⁵⁴

For about three months from the end of August 1942, there was an underground organization in Bombay which broadcast from 'somewhere in India' recorded voices of Gandhi and other leaders and news bulletins on the progress of the Quit India movement in its violent manifestations.¹⁵⁵ The Bombay police and other provincial government Criminal Investigation Departments collected plenty of information in 1942 and 1943 showing that underground Congressmen and youthful Congress sympathizers were responsible for introducing an unmistakable political character to the displays of mob violence against government property and the police, mass railway sabotage and interference with telegraph and telephone lines, which embarrassed the government in no small a measure in all the provinces of British India except the Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province, and Sind. In the Punjab, the popular ministers and the officials managed to neutralize the influence of the local Congress leaders.¹⁵⁶ In Sind, though the Premier, Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh, was a strong Congress sympathizer, the Congress organization was small, and, because of the Hur menace, a large part of the province was already under martial law.¹⁵⁷ In the North-West Frontier Province, the Frontier Gandhi (Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan) was strict on the non-violence issue, and the

ex-premier, Khan Sahib, and Ali Gul Khan, President of the North-West Frontier Congress Committee, were treated with tact and consideration by the governor.¹⁵⁸

In Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, and in other parts of India, Muslims and Muslim students generally did not join the Quit India movement, said government reports. There were no Hindu-Muslim riots worth noticing in this period. Muslim hooligans joined with others in Bihar here and there to loot government property. Muslim League workers everywhere warned the Muslims to stay away from the Congress-inspired agitation against the government. Communist workers in Bombay and other areas exercised a restraining influence on mill workers; and their influence helped in reopening of most of the mills in Bombay about a week after 9 August. In Ahmedabad, where Congress influence was strong, with mill-workers and mill-owners, the mills were idle for several weeks.

From 9 August 1942 till about March 1943, a self-appointed underground 'AICC' Office was in operation at Bombay. Also called the 'Central Congress Directorate', this office operated from Room Number 30 on the second floor of Patladhis Mala, No. 69/87 Cathedral Street, Bombay, and later from Room Number 16 on the second floor of Govind Building, Khetwadi Main Road, Bombay.¹⁵⁹ Sadiq Ali (the AICC Office Secretary, Allahabad), Sucheta Kripalani (wife of Acharya Kripalani, and Head, Women's Department, AICC Office, Allahabad), Aruna Asaf Ali (wife of a CWC member, Asaf Ali of Delhi, and a notable Congress worker in her own right), B. K. Keshkar (a Departmental Head, AICC Office, Allahabad), and Dr Rammanohar Lohia (an ebullient socialist whom the Mahatma had tamed by affection) were among the workers who aided in the operation of the underground Central Congress Directorate. Through various circulars, often sent by post and a network of messengers, the Directorate exhorted underground workers in the provinces to 'Do or Die'.

A copy of the 12-Point 'Instructions from AICC Office' was in the hands of the Bombay police not long after 9 August. The instructions began by quoting Gandhiji's cry: 'Do or Die', and Rashtrapati Maulana Azad's words in his closing address to the AICC at Bombay: 'Everyone shall act as the President (in case of the President's arrest).' The Instructions asserted: 'Our struggle is non-violent non-cooperation on the widest possible scale.' The twelve points were: hartals throughout the country to register the country's protest against the arrest of Gandhiji, the Congress president and members of the Working Committee; resistance to the salt laws; spreading the nationalist struggle to the villages; call to students to the task of leadership in rousing and awakening and utilizing the dumb millions in the freedom struggle; call

to government servants not to earn their livelihood by betraying their country at a time of deadly struggle; appeal to Indian soldiers and policemen to remember that it could be no part of their duty to the British Government to lathi-charge, tear-gas, or shoot non-violent crowds, peaceful processions or meetings; appeal to the princes and peoples of Indian States to join in the struggle; call to the women of India to rouse and exercise the people at the fateful period of the nation's history; wearing of badges with the motto 'Do or Die'; abolition of communal or racial feeling among freedom fighters; full provincial autonomy in the matter of carrying on the non-violent struggle; last but not the least, spinning with the charkha. 'Ending of foreign rule is our objective. Whatever helps in the attainment of that objective is, subject to the inexorable condition of non-violence, permissible and legitimate. People in the provinces have to devise and adopt all non-violent ways of paralysing the administration.' In effect, however, the Quit India movement in its mob or 'popular manifestations, from the day the Congress leaders were arrested, scarcely remained non-violent. It seems that it was assumed in private by many Congressmen that, in a 'mass movement' or 'open rebellion', with the arrest of Gandhiji, the Gandhian injunction of non-violence would not apply to those Congressmen who were not strict Gandhians by conviction and who accepted non-violence in politics as a matter of policy only.¹⁶⁰ According to a circular issued by the Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to the superintendents of police on 21 August 1942, the masses were being asked by some persons to give effect to a programme of non-cooperation to paralyse the government, 'by issue of unauthorised leaflets, bulletins, and other propaganda literature, issuing as if from a Dictator, who is at present Purushottamdas Tricumdas and who is underground.' 'The masses believe what comes to them from such unauthorised sources in the name of the Congress, and several presses and persons are prepared to take the consequences and risk in giving effect to this programme.'¹⁶¹

The Madras Police sent to Bombay on 18 August 1942 a copy of 'Gandhiji's last Message' which had been in circulation in Malabar. This unsigned message, ending with the cry 'Vande Mataram' and after mentioning of Gandhiji's 'Do or Die' dictum in the opening paragraph, said: 'Every man is free to go to the fullest length under 'Ahimsa' by complete deadlock, strikes, and all other possible non-violent means. Satyagrahis should go out to die and not to live. It is only when individuals go out to seek and face death that the nation will survive.' This Malabar Circulation approved of cutting of communications and telegraph wires, and an eventual no-tax campaign.¹⁶² We have quoted earlier in this chapter the official summary of the Andhra Circular dated Bezwada 29 July 1942, which was the main evidence in the hands of the government before 9 August 1942 to convince the British Cabinet that

precautionary arrests of Gandhi and the Congress leaders were necessary. The official summary of the Andhra circular telegraphed to London from New Delhi was not wrong, in stating the active or operative parts of the circular were to be undertaken only after the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee finally decided upon putting the items of the programme into operation. The tone of the complete text of the Andhra Circular was, however, not very violent, though urgent and strikingly imaginative in suggestions for embarrassing the government by acts of disobedience which could be 'individual', generalised individual, or mass,' and these in as many as five 'stages'. In this circular the strict Gandhians could read with satisfaction the following parts of instructions. The district Congress committees were told in the opening paragraph that it was open to them to supplement the items or alter the lines of organization work being suggested, subject to the following directive: '(1) The whole movement is based on non-violence. No act which contravenes this instruction should ever be undertaken. All acts of disobedience committed should be overt and never covert (open but not under cover).' At the end of the circular, there was the following paragraph:

Warning:— 99 out of 100 chances are for the inauguration of this movement by Mahatmaji at an early date, possibly a few hours after the next All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay. The D.C.Cs should be alert and begin to act immediately. But please also take note that no movement should be launched or any overt act done till Mahatmaji decides. After all he may decide otherwise and you will be responsible for a great unwarranted mistake. Be ready, organise at once, be alert but by no means act.

Some time after the disturbances started, a revised Andhra Circular accommodating violent and revolutionary action to suit the temper of the workers engaged in sabotage appeared from the underground in the Telegu language.¹⁶³

In the first week of September 1942, in the course of secret censorship of mail, the Bombay police found a copy of a circular issued in the name of the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee (under the signature of J.R. DeChazal). This Karnataka circular said: 'You need not wait for instructions. Except causing blood-shed, you may adopt any means to demoralise and put a stop to the whole machinery of Government.' The suggested programme of action included meetings and processions in villages proclaiming independence of India, behaving as free citizen of free India, establishment of 'parallel Government everywhere', destruction of village *chavadies* and such other buildings indicative of British rule, seizure of police stations and courts in talukas and districts,

making railways and telegraph and telephone communications useless.¹⁶⁴

An 'Appeal to Students' No. 3, issued by the underground AICC office in 1942 exhorted the youth to lead the Quit India movement and to concentrate on the purpose of snapping 'the artificial link of slavery' between the villages and cities of the country. An Appeal No. 4 addressed to the businessmen suggested that they should talk among themselves about the unsoundness of the Indian currency. An 'All-India Congress Committee Instruction No. 7, To Peasants, multiplied by the Council of Action, Bengal, P.C.C. 13/9/42' advised the establishment of *panchayat* government in villages (after declaring these free and the villagers freemen), taking peaceful possession of police posts and courts and other government buildings wherever the organizational strength of freemen permitted, denying the military or government officials the use of the peasants' carts and beasts of burden, stopping supply of grains and vegetables and building material to the military, and disruption of the government's lines of communication, but 'take care that you take or injure no life'. An 'Instruction No. 12 to the Peasants' issued under the name of the AICC said that peasants should hide their grain and not let grain fall into the hands of the police, that peasants should pay nothing to a landlord who was an ally of the government, and that people should convert paper money into goods. Further: 'You are perfectly within your right to put out of action the system of communication, whether roads or railways or postal and telegraph services', these being essential to the system through which the police and the military and civil officials of the British Government maintained their stranglehold on the Indian masses. A circular issued by 'the Organiser, War Council', the United Provinces Congress Committee, asked the peasants not to send their grain to their market as grain was being sent out of India for military purposes and was also stored by the British Government in cantonments.¹⁶⁵

A confidential note, 'Instructions to Congress Workers', prepared by Jawaharlal Nehru as President of the PCC, UP, dated Allahabad 24 July 1942, clearly said that it must be remembered by all Congressmen that non-violence had to be the basic feature of all activities in the coming movement in which 'formal satyagraha' would not be the method. 'Everything that we have known in 1930-32 will be repeated and much more.' Jawaharlal wrote that Gandhiji had already made clear that he contemplated non-payment of taxes, hartals and strikes, resignation from government service, salt manufacture, and refusal to obey government orders; and that the first step in Gandhiji's contemplated Quit India movement would possibly be 'an all-India hartal something of the nature of the famous hartal of April 6, 1919.'¹⁶⁶ Two weeks after the

outbreak of disturbances, one Miss Pandit wrote from her home, Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, a letter dated 23 August 1942, addressed to a girl friend in Lucknow, saying: 'Gandhiji's instructions are to completely paralyse the Government in any way possible, short of murder.' Each town was supposed to have sufficient brains to think up ways of embarrassing the government. She herself was working with others in Allahabad, making propaganda, publishing leaflets and distributing them. 'It is also important to work up wives and kids of Government officials and show them that their men folk are utter pansies!'¹⁶⁷

Two other appeals from the underground for accentuation of the popular later manifestation of the Quit India movement in 1943 deserve notice; these were issued by Jayaprakash Narayan, founder and formerly General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, who escaped by scaling the walls on Diwali night, 9 November 1942, from the Hazaribag Central Jail in Bihar, where he was a security prisoner for some months past after being transferred from the Deoli Detention Camp in Rajputana. A leader of all-India reputation, as a learned socialist and fine fighter enjoying the affection of Jawaharlal and Gandhi, Jayaprakash (unlike Gandhi who claimed himself to be a natural socialist) believed in the necessity of violence for enforcing socialist doctrines. After the Second World War broke out, Jayaprakash preached in secret his idea of utilizing the situation produced by the impact of world war for 'a war of National independence' as he once wrote to Subhas Chandra Bose. After escaping from Hazaribagh, Jayaprakash reached Banaras from where he established contacts with selected workers engaged in organizing resistance to the British authority in the United Provinces and Bihar; from Banaras, he went to Bombay wearing European clothes and sporting a beard, to meet the Congress underground. In January 1943, from 'somewhere in India', but under his signature, Jayaprakash addressed 'To all Fighters for Freedom' revolutionary greetings and congratulations on the battle already given to the British Government since August 1942. 'Nothing like it ever happened or was expected to happen in this our long-suffering and suppressed country. It truly was the "Open Rebellion" envisaged by our incomparable leader, Mahatma Gandhi.' The very fact that the British Government had admitted the extreme seriousness of the uprising of 1942 showed that 'the first phase of our National Revolution' was largely successful. A revolution was not an event but a social process which evolves and in which ebbs and tides are normal, said Jayaprakash. Because of two important reasons, the Indian revolution was going through a period of low water.

Firstly, there was no efficient organisation of the national revolutionary forces that could function and give effective lead to the mighty forces that

were released. The Congress, though a great organisation, was not tuned to the pitch to which the revolution was to rise. The lack of organisation was so considerable that even important Congressmen were not aware of the progress of the revolt, and till late in the course of the Rising it remained a matter of debate in accordance with the Congress programme. The earnestness, the urgency, the determination that marked the attitude of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr Rajendra Prasad or Sardar Patel failed to reflect in the hearts and minds of all Congress leaders.

Secondly, in 1942, having done its work of destruction in large parts of the country, the revolution called for a positive programme of revolutionary government which was not placed before the people. Jayaprakash declared that all the national revolutionary forces were already united under the flag of the Congress, and that their watchwords would be preparation for the next offensive, organization, and discipline. There was no compromise, said Jayaprakash, between the slogans of 'Quit India!' raised by Gandhiji and the Congress and of 'National Government', the cry of Rajaji and others; and those who cry for Congress-League unity before Indian independence were merely serving the ends of imperialist propaganda. It was not the lack of unity of the Congress and the League that was obstructing the formation of a National Government in India, but the natural unwillingness of Great Britain to liquidate her empire. 'Mr. Churchill left no manner of doubt about it when he declared recently that he had not assumed the office of the King's first minister to preside over the liquidation of the Empire.' The Quit India movement was to be made irrepressible. 1942 was not a defeat, when seen in the revolutionary perspective.

We really won the first round of the fight inasmuch as over large territories of the country the civil rule of the British aggressor was completely uprooted. The masses have now learnt from experience that the imposing edifice of the police and magistracy and law courts and prisons which goes by the name of British Raj is but a house of cards. . . . This lesson is not likely to be forgotten and constitutes the starting point for the next offensive.¹⁶⁸

With a price of five thousand rupees, soon raised to ten thousand, on his head, Jayaprakash galvanized briefly the underground Central Coordinating Council, and moved about secretly in north India. He set up a camp with few followers of a 'Freedom Brigade' at a wild spot on the Bihar-Nepal border from where they used a radio transmitter for revolutionary propaganda. Once he managed with the help of his do-or-die volunteers to escape (after a gun-fight at midnight at Hanumannagar) from the clutches of Nepalese authorities who had taken him and Rammanohar Lohia prisoner. Shortly after the incident, 'J.P.' appeared among his friends at Calcutta, having arrived in the city by train from

north Bengal. He had been in poor health ever since he was at Deoli in 1940-1. After his escape from Hazaribag Jail in November 1942, he lived a hunted life, moving in disguise from place to place, to initiate young braves into Gandhiji's *mantra* 'Do or Die' for Indian Independence, minus Gandhi's message of *ahimsa*. But like Subhas Chandra Bose, Jayaprakash always upheld the glory of the Mahatma's individual position as a patriot of surpassing humanism who was too good for the age of iron and gunpowder. In the second of his letters entitled 'To All Fighters for Freedom', which appeared from the underground on 1 September 1943, Jayaprakash said that the controversy which had sprung up among fighters on the question of violence and non-violence, particularly since the publication of the Gandhi-Linlithgow correspondence of 1942-3 some months earlier, was meaningless. 'Every fighter for freedom is free to choose his own method.' 'Those who believe in non-violence may harbour the fear that those who practise violence may compromise the position of Gandhiji. That fear is unfounded. Gandhiji's adherence to non-violence is so complete, his position in respect to it so clear, that not a hundred thousand Churchills and Amerys will be able to compromise him.' If there was violence in India in 1942-3, no one but the British Government themselves were responsible for it.

Some people were saying that, because Gandhi and the Working Committee were arrested before they could formally start their non-violent civil Quit India movement, what followed since 9 August 1942 was not a Congress struggle at all. If numerous people had reacted violently to the sudden arrest of their national leaders and if the masses had violently challenged the authority of the British Government, it did not mean that an unnatural and unexpected development in the fight for national independence had occurred, and that the Congress must disown this development.

Would the detractors of the present struggle have been happy if there had been no reaction to the arrest of the leaders, if the country had calmly bowed its head before the imperialist jack-boot? Or was it expected that only protest meetings should have been held demanding the release of arrested leaders [as was advocated by certain erstwhile revolutionaries], and when they were not released further meetings should have been held, till the audience became too disgusted to attend, after which the 'protestants' could have gone to sleep with a clear conscience? If this be so, where was the sense of that brave resolution and those brave words that were poured forth from the lips of the greatest in the land at the Bombay A.I.C.C.?

The Congress Socialist leader held that with the Quit India Resolution the Congress was on the warpath, that people were expected to rise in answer to the British offensive against the leaders, and that there was

neither grace nor fairness in decrying the national mass struggle that started on 9 August 1942 against the British rule as un-Congress and unauthorized by the Congress.

Not many days after the publication of this letter 'To All Fighters for Freedom', Jayaprakash was arrested (18 September 1943) at Amritsar on a train (the Frontier Mail from Delhi) and confined in the Lahore Fort as a security prisoner. After sixteen months, Jayaprakash was transferred from the Lahore Fort to the Agra Jail, from where he was released on 11 April 1946 because, it was said, the British Government at that time wished to please the Mahatma.¹⁶⁹

There were various reports of 'people's government' or 'parallel government' being formally declared, and crushed by the armed police and the military without trouble in a few days after their inception, in Ballia and Garhwal in the United Provinces, in the Monghyr District in Bihar, in Nagpur in the Central Provinces, and in Satara in the Bombay Province, in August 1942.

Only one 'parallel government' set up by patriots, that of Midnapore in Bengal, caused much embarrassment to the local police and military units, and made its existence felt, even respected, by lakhs of people in the district. The people in the Midnapore District had serious grievances against the government because of confiscation and burning of boats, confiscation of bicycles, export of rice from the district while people suffered from high prices and feared famine, since about April 1942, the time government started preparing the Bengal and Orissa coast against Japanese landings which never occurred.

Trouble with the police began on 8 September 1942, when a crowd of 2,000 attempted to prevent the export of rice by a rice-mill-owner, resulting in the death of three villagers by police firing, police raids in six villages, arrests of about 200 persons and sentences of eighteen months' imprisonment for 18 persons. A sort of home guard organization called Vidyut Vahini (Lightning Troops) of about 5,000 members, including about 500 women, set up to present a united front of villagers to the Japanese invaders some months ago, now got oriented to fight British oppression with meetings and processions, news sheets, and contacts with the underground Bengal Provincial Congress members. On 28 and 29 September 1942, many police stations were raided, bridges blown up, numerous trees felled to create road blocks, many miles of telegraph and telephone lines cut, and boats were sunk in rivers to prevent police reinforcements from reaching the district. The people declared themselves free from British rule, arrested some government servants but, on their promise not to serve the government any longer, released them and paid them railway fare to leave the Midnapore area.

The armed police fired upon and killed and injured many people who were marching upon the town of Midnapore in huge processions from four sides on 29 September; on the same date, 50,000 persons with numerous Vidyut Vahini volunteers in uniform made an attack on Sutarehata police station but were beaten back and dispersed by police firing. Under the leadership of Satish Chandra Samant, the first 'Dictator', a Tamralipta National Government was set up on 17 December 1942, by the underground; under its auspices, on Congress Independence Pledge Day, 26 January 1943, 'governments' were set up in the Sutarehata, Nandigram, Tamluk and Mahishadal areas. The Tamralipta Government organized departments dealing with bandits, thieves, famine, epidemics, secret service, civil and criminal cases, schools, soldiery (Vidyut Vahini of men, and Bhagini Sena of women), police, and ambulance. It is said about 3,000 cases were tried by the 'National Government' people in about two years of its operation.

A most severe cyclone visited Midnapore on 16 October 1942 destroying many thatched houses and cattle and accentuated scarcity conditions in the district. Systematic police combing of the area for the capture of local leaders, looting and burning of huts, torture of hundreds of suspects and aerial reconnaissance, punitive fines and sentences of rigorous imprisonment, merciless beating and intimidation, which were more or less common features of police excesses in carrying out the repressive policy of the Government of India in 1942-3 against the Congress-inspired Quit India movement in many parts of the country, were used with a vengeance in Midnapore. For many months, it was *police raj* by day when the police stood in strength, and it was *swaraj* by night in Midnapore District.¹⁷⁰

Underground Congress workers and Congress sympathizers among the youth generally gave to the Quit India movement in its popular manifestations a revolutionary temper, and in places a revolutionary character, however feeble, in resisting the reimposition and armed assertion of British authority in 1942-3. Accommodating in their direct action programmes the use of sabotage against Government and Railway properties and violence short of cold-blooded murder, besides other various forms of disobedience to British rule, they appeared to be in the line of inheritance, in an indirect and rather unexpected way, from the orthodox fire-eating Indian revolutionaries, who, since the first decade of the 20th century, promoted nationalism by organizing secret societies for desperate acts of killing of British Officials, and risking death, once caught, by hanging or life-sentences in the Andaman Jail after suffering brutal torture at the hands of the Indian police. Seeds of illegal revolutionary societies with creeds of political violence could sprout in soils freshly watered in 1942-3 with the blood of unknown

Indians who would be remembered, by their folk with pride, as martyrs and heroes of the Quit India movement.¹⁷¹

Within the Congress, should Gandhiji have disappeared from the scene by death, or should the government have aided in the weakening of the influence of 'the non-violence party' to the relative advantage of 'the violence party' by a prolonged policy of repression against the Congress, 'the violence party', particularly the Congress Socialists and those sympathetic to Subhas Chandra Bose, would have gained more influence than they ever had before the Quit India movement.¹⁷²

The Congress Socialists who were consistent in 1940-2 in urging a programme of mass satyagraha, gained in popularity among the youth in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Bombay. The underground activities of Aruna Asaf Ali, Achyut Patwardhan, Rammanohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan in 1942-3 greatly appealed to the imagination of the students in this period.¹⁷³

It was possible to depict the Quit India movement in its popular phase as the first great movement of violent, revolution-minded youth in India. As never before, the Congress seemed to have released in the politics of the freedom struggle the youth power of the country. Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Shankarrao Deo, Yusuf Meherally, and others, had suggested in their public speeches that in a mass civil disobedience movement, which would be unlike the strictly limited satyagraha of 1940-1, students would have a role to play and would have to make sacrifices for the country. And, it was for everyone to see, in large parts of the country students were the first to cry 'Quit India' and demonstrate, in groups, disobedience to the Defence of India Rules and the police, on 9 August 1942 and in the days immediately following. The youth appeared to be in command of the Quit India movement, after the leaders were arrested. On 17 August 1942, Linlithgow wrote to Amery:

The significant feature of the whole business has been the prominence of the part played by the student community. Discipline in Indian Universities is not the best — indeed, as someone remarked to me the other day, one of the most damaging things done by Gandhi and his friends in 1921 was to destroy discipline in schools and colleges. Taking the absence of any tradition of discipline, with the highly strung and excitable character of so many of these young men, and the amusement which it is so easy to get from smashing things or setting something on fire, and you have all the material for bad trouble.

The press had been 'a great nuisance', and the viceroy was conscious that his government were not doing enough to curb the flood of news on the disturbances.¹⁷⁴ In his situation report of the same date, the viceroy

told the secretary of state: 'Revolutionary character of that movement is more apparent in some areas, e.g. Bihar and Benares, than in others. Of its seriousness and its total disregard for non-violence there can be no question.'¹⁷⁵ A week later, the viceroy wrote that there had been a very considerable degree of organization in mob attacks on police stations, especially in the Azamgarh District in the United Provinces, and that Governor Hallett was entirely right in describing this movement in certain parts of the country at any rate as a rebellion. Governor Stewart of Bihar frankly admitted the extent to which he and the Bihar Government were taken by surprise by the scale and severity of the movement. Linlithgow wrote: 'I continue to be rather puzzled that our Intelligence should not have been able to give us rather more warning than it has of the way things were likely to go.' But the government had hit the movement hard. 'To the extent that Congress wanted to take us on in the open field it has done so and it has been beaten. To the extent that non-violence was supposed to be the basis of the movement, it has been proved abundantly (if indeed proof had ever been necessary) that non-violence is the very last thing that in fact characterizes development such as these.'¹⁷⁶ It would take time to beat the anti-government forces in the underground. The viceroy wrote on 1 September 1942:

This business has gone very deep throughout the country, and a good many classes or types have been stirred up which will not too easily settle back to normal — the students, the hooligans, the violent elements in villages and the out of the way parts of the country and the like, while there remains the possibility that we may have to face before too long a better organised underground campaign.

The daily crop of minor incidents connected with the movement would continue for many weeks. 'Finally, if the Mahatma indulges in a fast, we shall certainly have another outburst.' There was no news from the Aga Khan's Palace about Gandhi's plans. 'But the sensitiveness of some of my Hindu colleagues may be gauged from the fact that when I discussed the business of a fast the other day in Council, and made it clear that I contemplated the old man dying if he wanted to, one of them burst into tears at the table.'¹⁷⁷

9. Gandhi Acts from Prison

That there should be no question of release if Gandhi started a fast in prison was a British War Cabinet decision made on 7 August 1942. Cabinet strongly favoured deportation of Gandhi and other principal Congress leaders and had urged this on the viceroy, but the viceroy had replied that his council were unanimously against the deportation idea. Linlithgow himself first favoured the idea strongly, but had abandoned it after consulting governors, the more important of whom were

opposed to it and also the Director of the Intelligence Bureau. The viceroy found that there were indications that certain of the government's well-wishers might be alienated by the deportation of the leaders, and that Governor Lumley of Bombay and Governor Stewart of Bihar were among those who held the view that deportation 'would be ill-received and might develop into a real grievance likely to leave a very bitter and lasting memory'.¹⁷⁸

A hunger-strike was regarded by Gandhi as a legitimate political method for a satyagrahi. As part of his preparation for a mass satyagraha in support of the Quit India movement, Gandhi had published in the *Harijan* of 26 July 1942 an article under the caption 'Fasting in Non-violent Action', explaining that fasting might have a place in the coming struggle.

Non-violence in its positive aspect as benevolence (I do not use the word love as it has fallen into disrepute) is the greatest force because of the limitless scope it affords for self-suffering without causing or intending any physical or material injury to the wrong-doer. The object always is to evoke the best in him. Self-suffering is an appeal to his better nature as retaliation is to his baser. Fasting under proper circumstances is such an appeal *par excellence*.

Fasting unto death by a qualified and trained person could be, under given circumstances, the greatest and most effective weapon in the armoury of satyagraha, said Gandhi. 'If the struggle which we are seeking to avoid with all our might has to come, and if it is to remain non-violent as it must in order to succeed, fasting is likely to play an important part in it.' He observed that 'It has its place in the tussle with authority and with our own people in the event of wanton acts of violence and obstinate riots, for instance.'

On 9 August 1942, on the train from Bombay, Gandhiji was given by one of his fellow prisoners a copy of the Sunday edition of the *Evening News* in which was published the Government of India's resolution in justification of their policy in dealing with the crisis produced, as they said, by the Quit India demand of the Congress and the 'dangerous preparations by the Congress Party for unlawful and in some cases violent activities directed among other things to interruption of communications and public utility services, the organization of strikes, tampering with the loyalty of government servants, and interference with defence measures including recruitment.'¹⁷⁹ The resolution sought to educate public opinion in favour of the government orders for preventive detention of Congress leaders and the banning of the Congress Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee and subordinate Congress committees by the provincial governments being issued on

9 August and the following days. From his prison, the Aga Khan's Palace in Poona, Gandhiji wrote to Linlithgow on 14 August 1942, saying: 'The Government of India were wrong in precipitating the crisis.' 'The precipitate action of the government leads one to think that they were afraid that the extreme caution and gradualness with which Congress was moving towards direct action might make world opinion veer round to the Congress, as it had already begun doing, and expose the hollowness of the grounds for the government's rejection of the Congress demand.' That he would not hastily begin action, Gandhi had made amply clear in his speeches on 7 and 8 August. 'Violence was never contemplated at any stage.' The government should have brought to book the parties concerned with preparations for violence, immediately on receiving information of such 'preparations' alleged against Congressmen. The Government in its resolution had said: 'The Congress is not India's mouthpiece. Yet in the interests of securing their own dominance and in pursuit of their totalitarian policy its leaders have consistently impeded the efforts made to bring India to full nationhood.' Gandhi commented: 'It is a gross libel thus to accuse the oldest national organization of India. This language lies ill in the mouth of a government which has, as can be proved from published records, consistently thwarted every national effort for attaining freedom, and sought to suppress the Congress by hook or by crook.'¹⁸⁰

After he started receiving newspapers in prison, Gandhi wrote to the Government of India on 23 September 1942: 'The wholesale arrest of the Congress leaders seems to have made the people wild with rage to the point of losing self-control. I feel that the Government, not the Congress, were responsible for the destruction that has taken place.'¹⁸¹ On New Year's Eve 1942, from his detention camp, Gandhi wrote to Linlithgow:

I seem to be the *fons et origo* of all the evil imputed to the Congress. If I have not ceased to be your friend why did you not, before taking drastic action, send for me, tell me of your suspicions and make yourself sure of your facts? I am quite capable of seeing myself as others see me, but in this case I have failed hopelessly.

He had given himself six months' time before starting a fast in prison, in the hope that the authorities which had wronged him and others innocent men would relent. 'The law of *Satyagraha* as I know it prescribes a remedy in such moments of trial. In a sentence it is "crucify the flesh by fasting". That same law forbids its use except as a last resort.' On 13 January 1943, the viceroy wrote to Gandhi maintaining that the Government were right in arresting him and the Government might consider any positive suggestion Gandhi would now make. Being in no position

to know the mind of the Working Committee, Gandhi pleaded with the viceroy to make up his mind to end the impasse. The viceroy reiterated that he could not accept Gandhi's suggestions as to the responsibility of government and that, as preliminary to any arrangement, Gandhi should repudiate or dissociate himself from the Quit India resolution of the Congress and give the viceroy appropriate assurances as regards the future. In his reply dated 29 January 1943 Gandhi condemned 'the leonine violence' of the British Government in repressive measures against the people whom the government had goaded to the point of madness. The August resolution of 1942 had tendered co-operation in the United Nations' war effort under a free and *bona fide* National Government of India. 'As you should be aware, the Congress was willing and prepared for the government inviting Q.-A. Jinnah to form a national government subject to such agreed adjustments as may be necessary for the duration of the war, such Government being responsible to a duly elected assembly.' A National Government close to the people could have largely mitigated, said Gandhi, the sufferings of the poor millions due to India-wide scarcity of food in these months, besides serving the nation in other ways.¹⁸²

At the ripe age of 74, Mahatma Gandhi started on 10 February 1943 a 'capacity fast' of 21 days. Before he started it, his 17th public fast or 'public penance', Gandhi had made it clear to the government that he did not wish to die, but to survive the ordeal. Usually, during his fasts, he took water with the addition of salts, but this time he proposed to add juices of citrus fruits, to make water drinkable and to help his body accept water. 'This fast can be ended sooner by the government giving *the* needed relief', said Gandhi in his letter of 29 January 1943 to the viceroy. The government took elaborate measures for the maintenance of law and order and had drawn up instructions to the prison authorities and the Bombay Government regarding steps to be taken for performing Gandhi's last rites in case of death in prison. There was no question of releasing Gandhi at any stage of his fast, this time.¹⁸³ On 10 February, the Bombay Government issued an order that publication of news of Gandhi's fast and comments on it must be 'press-advised', and on 12 February, the Gandhi-Viceroy correspondence and an annexure, Gandhi's letter of 14 August 1942, were released. Newspapers carried on 12 February extracts from an editorial of *The Times* of London of 11 February saying that the fruit of Gandhi's fast could be deeper dissension and fresh disorder in India:

As an assertion of personal authority it is to say the least of it, superfluous. Mr Gandhi has rendered unique service to his country as promoter of national consciousness. He has failed wholly, however, to win the confidence of millions who do not accept his political leadership and to make his

contribution to a fundamental agreement, without which no free constitution can exist and which no power can impose on India from without.

The Times did not suggest that Gandhi devised or desired the outrages that followed his campaign of civil disobedience, but they resulted from his policy as inevitably as night follows day'.

Rajagopalachari made a statement in Madras on 11 February saying that Gandhiji's creed did not permit him to judge things or advise the nation, and that if Gandhiji were freed he could see for himself how events had developed since August 1942. 'When I asked the Viceroy in November last to let me see Gandhiji, it was to further a Congress-League settlement.'¹⁸⁴ Shyamaprasad Mookerjee, Working President of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, urged Gandhiji's release and said: 'There can be no solution of the Indian problem without Mahatma Gandhi.' On 15 February, in the Central Legislative Assembly at New Delhi, Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member, explained the Government of India's view that Gandhi was the acknowledged leader of an open rebellion in which he denied the authority of the existing government and sought to overthrow it; and that the government could not surrender their judgement under threat of a fast by Gandhi. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan explaining the Muslim League's position said that it was the responsibility of the government to maintain law and order and peace in the country, and that the League could support neither the release nor the detention of Gandhi in jail.¹⁸⁵ Nationalist members echoed an opinion commonly heard in the country during Gandhi's fast: 'If Mahatma Gandhi died in jail the Indian people shall never forget it and forgive the British people.' Representatives of the National Liberal Federation of India, the All-India Azad Muslim Board, the Mahagujarat Harijan Samaj (Ahmedabad), the Bombay Bullion Exchange, the Bombay Stock Exchange, the Nationalist Indian Christian Party of Bombay, the Mill-owners' Association of Bombay, the South Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce, the Jamait-ul-Ulema Hind, the Momin Conference, the National Council of Women in India, various representative associations of journalists, lawyers, teachers, businessmen, labour and craftsmen, commercial bodies, and communities from various parts of India, issued statements and resolutions urging Gandhiji's release, while newspapers published reports of Gandhi's health and the views of many public men who hoped that there would be a change of heart on the part of viceroy for the sake of the goodwill of the Indian people towards the British people. The Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha meeting on 14 February expressed in a resolution their prayerful wish that Mahatma Gandhi's spiritual strength would enable him to survive the ordeal of the fast, and that if the fast endangered his life the government would

set aside all political considerations and release Gandhiji and save his precious life. The Mahasabha, however, added a warning that: 'any move on the part of Congressmen or others to exploit this fast for political ends, as for example, to negotiate with Muslim League or to arrive at an agreement to end the present deadlock, without consulting the Hindu Mahasabha and securing its agreement, would not in any case be binding on the Hindus.' P.C. Joshi, General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, addressed a mass rally held at Kamgar Maidan, Bombay, appealing to Congress patriots: 'Stop sabotage and anarchy, win the League to join you in demanding Gandhiji's release.'¹⁸⁶

Anxiety mounted on 15 and 16 February, for Gandhiji's condition showed deterioration; he had difficulty in taking water. The government having relaxed prison rules relating to visitors to Gandhi because of the fast, his relatives and friends and many important people were permitted to see Gandhi and pay their respects, while a team of eminent doctors, official and private, examined and watched him, and prepared Gandhiji's health bulletins every day. Dr B.C. Roy, the famed physician and eminent Congressman from Calcutta, joined on 15 February the team of doctors attending upon the Mahatma; on the following day, he told the United Press that Gandhiji being 74 years of age, his fast this time presented a more difficult and complicated problem than his earlier fasts.¹⁸⁷ On 17 February, Sir H.P. Mody, the Supply Member, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, the Commerce Member, and Dr Madhao Srihari Aney, Member for Indians Overseas, placed the interests of the country above other considerations in this crisis, and resigned from the Viceroy's Executive Council, a position regarded the highest for an Indian in the Government of India.¹⁸⁸

On 18 February, Gandhiji was reiterating to his friends that he knew the extent of his endurance, but the communiqué on his health under the signatures of six doctors said that his heart action was feebler, the evidence of uremia was progressive, and anxiety as to his condition deepened. Gandhiji was not mentally alert and showed little interest in conversation. On the following day, his weakness increased and he had excessive salivation. Numerous appeals were sent to the viceroy from various people to save Gandhi's life and to release him from prison. He had lost 14 pounds upto 19 February; he refused to take glucose. On 22 February, the bulletin on Gandhi's health said: 'After a restless day on 21st, Mr Gandhi entered a crisis at 4 p.m. He was seized with severe nausea and almost fainted and the pulse became nearly imperceptible. Later he was able to take water with sweet-lime juice. He rallied from the crisis and slept for about 5½ hours during the night.' Two days later, the doctors were hopeful of Gandhiji's survival; on 28 February, they found him mentally alert and one of his doctors officiated as his barber

in removing the beard and trimming the moustache grown in the past eighteen days on his face. The doctors had saved his life by persuading him on 21 February that his nausea and progressive uremic condition, signifying the approach of collapse and death, could only be arrested if he would start without further delay drinking water mixed with sweet-lime juice alternately with water mixed with sour-lime juice. Till then, he was drinking water mixed with sour-lime juice. The amount of sweet-lime juice now being added to his drinking water did not amount to food to break the condition of his fast; it was just sufficient to remove dangerous symptoms of nausea and uremia, and to enable him to complete the 21-day programme of penance. Millions of people of all communities felt happy, on learning that on 3 March, at 9.30 a.m., after prayers using holy texts of several religions, Mahatma Gandhi broke his fast by drinking a glass of orange juice mixed with water offered to him by Kasturba, his wife.¹⁸⁹

Mahatma Gandhi's fast was a stirring event of national importance, undermining popular respect for British rule in 1943. He appeared to be performing penance, in his own person, for the good of the nation. His fast seemed to have a purifying influence, in a subtle way, on the Congress mind and on the nationalist mind generally. Non-violence, not violence, was the Congress forte. This fact was in need of an assertion by a non-violent satyagrahi of supreme *yasha* (fame of nobility which is a power in human affairs), extolled in the ancient epics of the Hindus. In popular imagination and in truth, Mahatma Gandhi was much more than the supreme commander named by the Congress party in August 1942 to lead a mass satyagraha which he had no opportunity to lead and keep disciplined. At one stroke, it seemed, Mahatma Gandhi's fast raised the struggle of 1942 from a physical to a moral or spiritual level, for the benefit of all nationalists.

The masses, including government servants, revered Gandhi as the nation's greatest asset. Without intending to do so, the Government of India did a service to the Gandhi legend and the cause of Indian nationalism by publishing, soon after the Gandhi fast began, Gandhi's letter of 14 August 1942 refuting the Government of India's charges against the Congress and the Gandhi-Viceroy correspondence on the Quit India movement. This bunch of correspondence between Gandhi and the viceroy, which amounted to an exchange of letters between an 'open rebel' under indefinite detention and a 'Big Lord Sahib' representing His Majesty's Government in the Indian Empire on the subject of the detention of the Congress leaders and the Congress way of serving India, did much, in the eyes of Congressmen and Congress sympathisers, to strengthen the self-respect of the official Congress and of the Indian people, after the unprecedented outburst of popular violence and police excesses in various parts of the country.

More than any other single person, Mahatma Gandhi was the promoter of the Quit India movement as it developed till 8 August 1942, though various other factors had also contributed to the force of this movement. These were mainly: the impact of the World War on the nationalist mind; the preparations for an upheaval in the form of satyagraha in a big way which the Congress had made since the Ramgarh Congress of 1940; the disappointment of many when the Mahatma firmly refused in 1940-1 to approve of a mass satyagraha, the Mahatma's disappointment when at the end of his morally excellent and politically wise Individual Satyagraha Campaign of 1940-1 the British War Cabinet offered to India in the spring of 1942 not even a clear promise of Indian 'independence' which he wished to see before death; the invasion scare in India after the utterly astonishing quick collapse of British administrations and military defences in Malaya and Burma; the War Cabinet's policy of 'do nothing' to transfer real power to Indians while exploiting as much as practicable India and Indians for Britain's war in Asia and Africa; the accentuation after the failure of the Cripps mission of the British Government's war-time propaganda in India, England and America, blaming the Congress for the constitutional deadlock, and suggesting that Congress was a communal party and that Congressmen were no real well-wishers of Great Britain and America, China and Russia; a growing feeling among Congressmen in the summer of 1942 that inactivity by the Congress would be interpreted as political timidity produced by Great Britain refusing to vacate her old aggression and Japan meditating new aggression for the mastery of India and South Asia. Gandhi's political instinct did not err when he asserted that it was time, for him, and for the Congress, to tell the British Government to withdraw, in an orderly fashion, their imperial power for good and evil in India and let the future reveal itself for the Indian people under Indian leadership.

1942 prepared the ground in political psychology in India, possibly in England also, for 1947. The 'non-violence party' and 'the violence party' together accepted 'the August Resolution', the Quit India Resolution, as calculated to raise a tidal wave of nationalist emotion for Independence, to help India to become, as Gandhi put it, as free as Britain and America were. That tidal wave did arise hugely, helped by the Government of India's plan for 'a lightning war' against the Congress, beginning with surprise preventive arrests of leaders. 'We are at war. The rebellion was the most formidable uprising since that [of] 1857. We shall be well advised to take no risks,' Linlithgow wrote this in a note dated 4 February 1943, advising the Home Department to maintain as far as practicable the prescribed stringent conditions of detention of security prisoners in connection with the Quit India movement.¹⁹⁰

Again and again, in reports to the secretary of state in 1942, the viceroy praised the loyalty of the government services. To give the police and the local authorities encouragement to resort to extraordinary repression in dealing with the movement, the governor-general advised the governors in August 1942 that it should be conveyed to the local authorities that there would be no enquiries into allegations of official excesses.¹⁹¹ Stories of these excesses by officials and police against patriots in 1942, as much as stories of patriots rising in violent rebellion and sacrificing their lives for a cause which had already become good and holy for millions of Indian people, helped in the following years to reduce 'the fear of the Government' in the hearts of the masses and to multiply the supporters of independence. In 1942-3, the 'Congress Rebellion', the combined effect of the work of Gandhi, the official Congress, and the Congress underground, with students and hooligans thrown in, did not decrease the popularity and influence of the Congress. In the following years, on being freed from jail, the official Congress would deny the legitimacy of violence in the internal struggle against imperialism, reaffirm Congress faith in non-violence in internal struggle, and disown the work of the Congress Socialist leaders and other workers in the underground who had resorted to violence. But the Congress could not deny that the unofficial phase of the Quit India movement constituted a chapter in Congress history in which the masses as well as Congressmen featured largely. Gandhiji could claim that the masses of India, unlike the masses in many other countries, were basically non-violent and decent, and that, to his mind, India offered the best field for grand experiments in *swaraj* (self-rule, freedom) based on *ahimsa* (non-violence) which must be promoted by good people everywhere seeking peace with themselves and their neighbours. The eruption of violence in connection with the Quit India movement filled Gandhi with sorrow, but he did not consider the position beyond remedy; it provided him with an additional motive to live, though his body was weary with age and he found his detention in the Aga Khan's Palace a 'living burial'.

From an administrative point of view, August 1942 marked the surfacing in Indian politics of mental processes favouring concerted hooliganism, mob-violence, a degenerate form of mass action. After noticing 'the birth of this evil spirit', Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Member for Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, wrote to the governor general on 16 August 1942: 'There are times in the history of a human soul when a definite call comes to it which cannot be ignored or put aside lightly.' Such a call had come to him, and he felt it as his paramount duty to do all he could to resist the emergence of this phenomenon in his country; he sought permission to visit Gandhi in prison to apprise him of the situation (Gandhi was then not permitted to

receive newspapers, visitors, or communications from outside), and to convey to Gandhi an appeal and a challenge to use his personal influence in this crisis, which was more moral and spiritual than political in importance. 'I feel that, at this moment, the only man whose efforts can with some chance of success neutralise the forces of disorder is Mr Gandhi.'¹⁹² The viceroy saw no reason for modifying the government's policy towards Gandhi or for altering the crush-the-Congress attitude. Thereupon, the proud and wise 'Sir C.P.' resigned from Lord Linlithgow's council, on 21 August 1942. He had taken his seat in the council on 3 August 1942, reputedly to help the government in some giant-killing programme. Gandhi's unique position in the country was emphasized by about 200 leaders and eminent men, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian, from all parts of India, who met at New Delhi on 19 and 20 February 1943, to give expression, as Rajagopalachari said in his address of welcome, 'to the feeling in this country that Mahatma Gandhi should be enabled to end his fast'. Why should the Government of India choose to ignore popular feeling in India, and treat Gandhi as an ordinary rebel of no importance in history? It was not statesmanship to do so. If it was intended that this country should settle down to constructive work, then it was absolutely necessary that Gandhi should be released, said Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the grand old man of Indian liberalism, in addressing the leaders' meeting on the second day (20 February 1943). An historical perspective of current events may sometimes console and cheer wise men interested in the future. 'Mr Gandhi has been called a rebel, but', said Sir Tej Bahadur, 'there was a rebel called Smuts who is rendering the greatest possible service to the Empire. There was another rebel called de Valera, whom the British Government wanted to remain in the Empire.' 'I believe', Sir Tej Bahadur declared, 'that one lesson which is reinforced by British history is that the British Government has always settled with rebels rather than with loyalists. (More cheers and laughter.) I am not down-hearted when Mahatma Gandhi is put down by the Home Member as a rebel. I still live in the hope there will be a settlement with these rebels and when it takes place men like you and me will be ignored. (Laughter.)'¹⁹³

Men like Sapru and Jayakar and Rajaji and other non-party leaders were really never ignored either by the British Government or by Mahatma Gandhi and Congress before or after the Congress rebellion of 1942. In their respective ways leaders and partymen of every description, Indian and British, were patriots. Nationalist politics in India was the politics of English-educated gentlemen, and the Government of India was government under the law and government by gentlemen, white and brown. The Government of India was pleased to release Gandhiji from detention in Aga Khan's palace in Poona on 6 May 1944. The

Congress president and his Working Committee were released from detention in June 1945. The transfer of power in India was not far off.

Notes and References

1. S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, (Abbrev. SWJN), Vol. XII (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 367-72.
2. See SWJN, XII, pp. 45-55.
3. For AICC proceedings at Wardha, 15 January 1942, press reports, see *Leader* (Allahabad) 16-1-42, and *Hindusthan Standard* (Calcutta, Dak ed.) 17-1-42; for reports on AICC proceedings on 16 January 1942, see *Hindusthan Standard* (Dak ed.) 18-1-42.
4. *Leader* 16-1-42, on CWC meeting, Wardha, 14 January 1942.
5. See SWJN, XII, p. 76, for Jawaharlal's speech at the AICC, 15 January 1942; and pp. 56-7 for Instructions issued by the CWC at Bardoli on 30 December 1941.
6. See in Nicholas Mansergh and E.W.R. Lumby (eds.), *The Transfer of Power 1942-7* (Abbrev. TOP), Vol. I, *The Cripps Mission January-April 1942* (London, 1970), No. 24.
7. TOP, I, No. 20.
8. TOP, I, No. 30.
9. TOP, I, No. 23.
10. TOP, I, No. 23.
11. TOP, I, No. 22.
12. TOP, I, No. 27 and No. 57.
13. TOP, I, No. 35.
14. TOP, I, No. 60.
15. In the National Archives, New Delhi, see Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42.
16. TOP, I, No. 4.
17. TOP, I, No. 1.
18. TOP, I, No. 82.
19. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 24.
20. See *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.), 9-4-42; *Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta, Bengali) 10 Baishakh 1341 (23-4-42); *Leader*, 27-4-42 (for Jawaharlal's statement at Calcutta, 25 April 1942, impressions of his Assam tour). The evacuation of Indians from Burma and Malaya considerably affected popular opinion, in the early months of 1942, throughout the country. Racial feeling was acute in these months mainly because of four factors: discrimination in evacuation facilities and refugee care; the presence and misconduct of 'Tommyes' (White troops), cases of molestation of women and assault on the natives by White troops; evacuation and requisition orders for military purposes; and disparities in pay and facilities of native recruits (sepoys, laskars, officers and others) compared with those of White troops of similar rank in the British forces. Newly arrived in India, swarms of British troops were apt to treat Indians as conquered people. Even Indian members of the Indian Civil Service in 1942 were obliged to assert their Indianness, at times. For an interesting incident as reported in newspaper, see in *Leader*, 21-4-42, Report dated Nagpur, 19

January 1942. ' "I hope you will learn a lesson and behave better in future. Remember this train is not yours and also that this country is ours." With these words Mr C.M. Trivedi, Chief Secretary to the Central Provinces Government, closed an incident at the railway station in which he and a European passenger were involved.'

21. *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.), 28-5-42.
 22. *TOP*, I, No. 615.
 23. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 19.
 24. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, pp. 25-26.
 25. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42.
 26. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 30-2.
 27. *SWJN*, XII, p. 32.
 28. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 56-7.
 29. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 61-72.
 30. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 77-9.
 31. *SWJN*, XII, p. 103.
 32. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 117-21.
 33. *SWJN*, XII, p. 126.
 34. For instances see *SWJN*, XII, pp. 30-1, 135-7.
 35. See in Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 22. Extract from a letter dt. 15-3-42 from N.M. Joshi, MLA, New Delhi, to Miss Kamal Wagle, Bombay: 'After coming here from Lahore I spoke to Maxwell [Home Member] asking him to release the detenus in view of the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps. But I could not persuade him. Aney has spoken to the Viceroy about the matter. But the Viceroy asked him to speak to Maxwell and Aney asked me to speak to other Indian members. When Cripps comes here I shall try to get an opportunity of meeting him and ask him to speak to the Viceroy.'
- See in *TOP*, I, No. 608, Cripps to Linlithgow, 11 April 1942, making to the Government of India a parting request that detained students be released from jail 'to reinforce the efforts of those students outside who are trying to concert their whole body to an intensive war effort'.
36. At the Provincial Kisan Conference held at Pratapganj in the UP, Jawaharlal declared on 28 February 1942 that all organizations, whether of the kisans or of the students, as were opposing the Congress in regard to the war would have to be opposed by the Congress. See *SWJN*, XII, pp. 560-1.
 37. See in *TOP*, I, No. 36.
 38. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 467-70.
 39. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 471-6.
 40. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Vol. VI, 1940-1945 (Bombay, 1953) pp. 75-6.
 41. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, VI, pp. 74-5.
 42. *SWJN*, XII, p. 15.
 43. See *SWJN*, XII, p. 92, n. 3.
 44. *TOP*, I, No. 5.
 45. *TOP*, I, No. 1.
 46. *TOP*, I, No. 50.

47. TOP, I, No. 2.
48. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42.
49. See correspondence quoted in A.R.H. Copley, *The Political Career of C. Rajagopalachari: A Moralism in Politics* (Delhi, 1978), pp. 186-7.
50. SWJN, XII, pp. 91-2.
51. *Leader*, 9-2-42.
52. *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.), 23-2-42. Also *Leader*, 23-2-42.
53. TOP, I, No. 192 and No. 164.
54. For Azad Muslim Conference Board meeting, Delhi, 28 February-1 March 1942, see *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.) 3-2-42. For Jamaitul-Ulema-i-Hind meeting, Lahore, 22 March 1942, see in Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 21.
55. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 219/42, pp. 14 and 32.
56. For motion by Labour Members, Commons, 4 March 1942, see for Prime Minister's statement to Commons, 11 March 1942, see TOP, I, No. 308.
57. For Rajagopalachari's statement, 22 March 1942, see *Leader*, 24-3-42. See TOP, I, No. 376. For Governor Twynam to Linlithgow, Letter dt. 24 March 1942.
58. See in TOP, I, No. 384, Memorandum of a conversation between Linlithgow and Cripps on the night of 25 March 1942.
59. TOP, I, No. 379.
60. TOP, I, No. 397.
61. TOP, I, No. 416.
62. TOP, I, No. 434, and No. 435.
63. See TOP, I, No. 454, for letter to Azad, 30 March 1942; and No. 448 for meeting with Bhulabhai Desai.
64. For meeting with Jawaharlal, 30 March 1942, see TOP, I, No. 557; and No. 461 for meeting with Sitaramayya, 31 March 1942.
See R.J. Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India, 1939-1945* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 1-10, for Cripps's earlier visit to India (September-December 1939), Cripps's pro-Congress attitude, and his friendship with Jawaharlal, and Jawaharlal's friendly meeting in 1938 with Attlee, Aneurin Bevan, Richard Crossman, Leonard Barnes, and Harold Laski, at Cripps's country house, at Filkins, on week-end. The genesis of the Cripps offer of 1942 has been traced to this meeting at Filkins in 1938. In 1942, Cripps was probably not fully aware of the intensity of Jawaharlal's no-compromise feeling on the matter of Independence expressed in various statements in 1940-1, the build-up in nationalist circles in the spring of 1942 of the demand for a truly National Government capable of organizing national defence against Japanese aggression, and the contempt and distrust with which Maulana Azad and both strict Gandhites and others in the Working Committee viewed the Linlithgow offer of 1940 which Cripps appeared to offer in new clothing to Azad and Nehru in the last stage of the Cripps Mission negotiation in April 1942.
65. See TOP, I, No. 480; No. 496; and No. 519; for developments between 1 April and 4 April 1942.
66. For developments indicated, 7 April to 12 April 1942, see in TOP, I, No. 543; in SWJN, XII, pp. 197-227; and Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and*

India, p. 119 for Nehru to Johnson, letter, 9 April 1942, and pp. 114-22 on the failure of the Cripps Mission, and pp. 122-32 for post mortem of the mission.

67. In *TOP*, I, see No. 583, No. 587, and No. 590.
68. See *TOP*, I, No. 604, and No. 605; and in *SWJN*, XII, pp. 188-91, 213-27. For Jawaharlal's statement made at Allahabad, 15 April 1942, see *Leader* 16-4-42.
69. See Moore, *Churchill, Cripps, and India*, pp. 127-8, on Gandhi's role. Moore says on p. 122: 'The Cripps mission was crushed by the monolithic millstones of Churchillian Conservatism and Congress nationalism.'
70. Home Dept., Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 36.
71. Home Dept., Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 37.
72. Home Dept., Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 33.
73. *TOP*, I, No. 673.
74. *TOP*, I, No. 694.
75. Home Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 35.
76. *TOP*, I, No. 632 and No. 684.
77. Home Dept., Pol. (I), 219/42, pp. 42, 43, 39 and 43.
78. Home Dept., Pol. (I), 219/42, p. 34. Also *TOP*, I, No. 651.
79. For Madras Resolutions, see *Leader*, 25-4-42. Also, *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.) 25-4-42.
80. *Leader*, 26-4-42.
81. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 238-9.
82. *Leader*, 31-3-42.
83. *SWJN*, XII, p. 226.
84. *TOP*, II, No. 4.
85. *Leader*, 30-4-42, 1-5-42.
86. See *SWJN*, XII, pp. 276-85 for drafts mentioned; also in *TOP*, II, Enclosure to No. 43, for Draft No. 1 dated 27 April 1942 (including the crossed out portion, as noted by G.D. Parkin on 6 May 1942). See *TOP*, II, Enclosure to No. 113, for discussions in the Working Committee on the 'War Resolution' as recorded in AICC Office Secretary's Note.
87. For AICC proceedings, 2 May 1942, at Allahabad, see *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.), 3-5-42. For Jawaharlal's speech, see *SWJN*, XII, pp. 294-5.
88. For Linlithgow's comment on Rajaji's new move, see *TOP*, II, No. 21.
89. For Rajagopalachari's press conference, Delhi, 4 May 1942, see *Leader*, 5-5-42.
90. Rajaji quoted from the *Harijan*, 19-4-42, in his speech at the AICC session, Allahabad, 2 May 1942, to make the point that there was no question of compelling the Muslims to reject the Pakistan idea. Gandhiji wrote on this point again in May to explain that he wished all conflicting elements and interests in India to make a combined effort to rid India of foreign domination. Gandhiji did not approve of Rajaji's effort 'to buy unity' by negotiation, yielding the right of secession from free India. In Gandhiji's appreciation, Rajaji was blinded by 'fear of the Japanese occupation of India'. Gandhiji concentrated, in the summer of 1942, in his writings in the *Harijan*, on one basic teaching: fear of the Japanese, of anarchy in India, and of the wrath of the British Lion would be reduced

in the minds of men, once they become possessed with the singular idea of independence. The Government of India's Intelligence Bureau naturally studied the *Harijan* closely in May 1942 and in the following months. For instance, see *TOP*, II, Nos. 24, 44, 67 and 171.

91. For Gandhiji's interview to the press, Bombay, 16 May 1942, see *Leader*, 17-5-42, and *Hindusthan Standard* (dak. ed.), 19-5-42.
92. *Leader*, 16-5-42.
93. For letter from Sharaf Athar Ali to P.C. Joshi, dt. Bombay, 17 May 1942, see *TOP*, II, No. 90 (Enclosure 2). Also, in B.G. Kunte (ed.), *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India: Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. III, pt. VII: 1934-1945 (Govt. of Maharashtra, Bombay, 1975) (Abbrev. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*), pp. 584-8.
94. See *TOP*, II, No. 108 and Enclosure, Note by D. Pilditch, Intelligence Bureau, Home Dept. G.O.I., 30 May 1942; and No. 85, on Mira Ben's visit to Orissa.
95. *TOP*, II, No. 108.
96. *Hindusthan Standard* (dak ed.), 23-5-42.
97. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 325-30.
98. *TOP*, II, No. 43.
99. *TOP*, II, No. 113.
100. *TOP*, II, No. 86.
101. See Copley, *Rajagopalachari*, pp. 197-8, and p. 196.
102. See *Leader* 10-6-42, for Acharya Kripalani's article. For material on Rajaji's resignation, see *Leader* 31-5-42 and 10-7-42; also Copley, *Rajagopalachari*, pp. 222-4, on Rajaji's attitude during the Quit India movement and conflict with Kamraj Nadar.
103. See in *SWJN*, XII, p. 351, J.L. Berry's Report of Interview with Jawaharlal Nehru at New Delhi on 24 May 1942.
104. J. Nehru to J.L. Berry, dt. Allahabad, 3 June 1942, in *SWJN*, XII, p. 355.
105. See *SWJN*, XII, pp. 330-2, 357-8.
106. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 359-62.
107. *Leader*, 15-6-42, 21-6-42, 23-6-42.
108. *Leader*, 23-6-42.
109. See *SWJN*, XII, pp. 378-9, for Gandhi's letter to Roosevelt; and pp. 346-67, for letter to General Chiang Kai-shek.
110. For the making of the Wardha resolution of 14 July 1942, see *SWJN*, XII, pp. 386-400. The declaration that, in the National Government of free India, political power should naturally belong to the toilers in the fields, factories and elsewhere, made N.G. Ranga, the eminent Andhra leader of kisans, 'overjoyed'. See N.G. Ranga, *Fight For Freedom* (Delhi, 1968), p. 314.
111. See in *SWJN*, p. 422, Jawaharlal's letter to Sampurnanand dt. Allahabad, 28-7-42.
112. *TOP*, II, No. 355.
113. *TOP*, II, 355; and No. 672 for the first 'political incident' in the Army, in which a Parsee Second Lieutenant refused to undertake duties which involved taking an active part against the Congress, and requested permission to resign his commission. Linlithgow thought that 'there

might be something to be said for transferring a few of these gentlemen to the Western Desert.'

114. On the Punjab situation, see *TOP*, II, No. 287 and No. 331.
115. On the N.W.F. Province, see in *TOP*, II, Nos. 471, 315, 316.
116. For Sind situation, see *TOP*, II, No. 328.
117. On Bengal, see *TOP*, II, No. 461 and No. 313. On Orissa, see *TOP*, II, 368.
On Bishwanath Das's arrest, see *Leader*, 1-7-42.
118. *TOP*, II, No. 327.
119. *TOP*, II, Nos. 268, 296.
120. *TOP*, II, Nos. 320, 344.
121. *TOP*, II, Nos. 304, 390.
122. *TOP*, II, Nos. 314, 370, 406.
123. *TOP*, II, No. 407.
124. *TOP*, II, Nos. 308, 380, 624. For Sardar Patel's speech at Ahmedabad, 26 July 1942, see *Leader* 28-7-42. Patel declared: 'Sir Stafford Cripps' visit disillusioned the Congress and drove Mahatma Gandhi to demand the withdrawal of the British power from India.' The British Government had made it impossible for the Congress to aid their war-effort; they rejected the 'Poona Offer', the Congress had made at the risk of separation from Mahatma Gandhi; they misunderstood the Congress policy of non-embarrassment to the British Government followed since the beginning of the war. Not a single party in India said a good word about Cripps' proposals which were really made to counteract public opinion in America and China growing in favour of freedom to India. Gandhiji suspected the *bona fides* of the British Government and demanded their withdrawal in order to fit India for defence against the impending foreign aggression. India was excluded from the benefit of the Atlantic Charter. The Communist slogan of 'the people's war' was good, as far as Russia was concerned. But Russia did not appear interested in Indian independence; the recent long-term Anglo-Russian treaty indicated that Russia promised to keep her hands off the internal matters of the British Empire for 20 years after the conclusion of the war. The British Government had a knack of making quick friends; it was good that the Government of India had lifted their three-year-old ban on the Communist Party of India. The British Labour Party was no better than other parties in England, in regard to the question of India; among other things, one of their leader's in the past, Ramsay Macdonald, was responsible for the Communal Award in India which compelled Mahatma Gandhi to undertake a hazardous fast unto death. India could not expect a fair deal from the British Cabinet in which the Labour representatives appeared no less reactionary than Churchill and Eden.
Sardar Patel's Ahmedabad speech of 26 July 1942 is probably one of the most hard-hitting public speeches he made in 1942 in support of the Quit India movement. He was obviously provoked by the London *Daily Herald's* editorial of 21 July 1942: 'Good friends you are betraying us'.
125. *TOP*, II, No. 393.
126. *TOP*, II, No. 245.
127. *TOP*, II, No. 393.

128. *Leader*, 24-7-42.
 129. For search of Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad, on 25 May 1942, see *Leader* 27-5-42. For comments made by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Allahabad, 5 July 1942, on the expansion of the Viceroy's Council, see *Leader* 6-7-42. See *Leader* 7-8-42, for the statements of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal, Bombay, 5 August 1942.
 130. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 428-31.
 131. *SWJN*, XII, pp. 436-53.
 132. *TOP*, XII, No. 425.
 133. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 1947), Vol. II, pp. 359-63.
 134. Regarding arrangements for the AICC meeting, Jawaharlal wrote to S.K. Patil, dated Allahabad, 27-7-1942: 'The usual arrangements for singing national songs are almost invariably bad.' The only songs that should be permitted were: *Vandemataram*, Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* and Iqbal's *Hindustan Hamara*. 'Please do not get that very expert gentleman who sang at Ramgarh and elsewhere. Classical styles of singing are totally inappropriate at large public functions.' Further: 'Please also avoid the introduction of all manner of musical instruments on the dais. We cannot convert the A.I.C.C. into a concert party.' See *SWJN*, XII, pp. 503-4.
 135. For press report on AICC proceedings, Bombay 7 August 1942, see *Leader*, 8-8-42. For Nehru's speech see *SWJN*, XII, pp. 454-7. For Patel's speech at the AICC see D.V. Tahmankar, *Sardar Patel* (London, 1970), pp. 178-9.
 136. See in Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 706-7.
 137. For proceedings AICC, Bombay 8 August 1942, press report, see *Leader*, 10-8-42. In quoting from Gandhiji's speech we have used the press version which was available to the public and which reads better than the full official transcription of his speech in the Bombay Police Commissioner's file given in Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 598-9.
 138. See Tahmankar, *Patel*, p. 180. Also Francis G. Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution : The Quit India Movement* (Delhi, 1971), pp. 269-70.
 139. See in Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, p. 605.
 140. *TOP*, II, No. 624, for account of the round up of leaders in Bombay on 9 August 1942. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan resigned from the Congress Working Committee in February 1942, on the Committee's failure to support Mahatma Gandhi fully on the issue of non-violence policy. Bhulabhai Desai resigned from the committee in the first week of July 1942 owing to ill health.
- Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the national flag (the Congress Tricolour), the flag of rebellion, in spite of police *bandobast*, in the AICC meeting ground in the Gowalia Tank area, on the morning of 9 August 1942. She announced the arrest of Gandhiji and the Working Committee. The police pulled down the national flag and used lathis and tear-gas to disperse the Congress volunteers who had gathered according to schedule for a rally and flag-hoisting by Jawaharlal. Rioting soon spread over the city of Bombay. See in Sitaramayya, *Congress*, II, pp. 359-60, for events of 9 August 1942. For comments by newspapers and public

figures on the Government's policy of repression of Congress, See in the *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, *India Unreconciled* (New Delhi, 2nd ed. 1944), pp. 41-66.

141. TOP, II, No. 429.

142. TOP, II, No. 474.

143. TOP, II, No. 451 and n. 2 in it.

144. For situation reports sent to the Secretary of State in the period, 10 to 14 August 1942, see TOP, II, Nos. 491, 511, 524, 544. For detailed account of the Tenali disturbances, attack on Chirala Railway Station, the Guntur firings, in Andhra, in this week, see Sarojini Regani, *Highlights of the Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad, 1972), pp. 150-2. Congress volunteers and students were prominent in starting disturbances.

145. For situation reports, 15-17 August 1942, see TOP, II, Nos. 555, 556, 567, and 572; also No. 577 for comment on Bengali students; No. 612, for Governor Stewart's account of the outburst of violence in Patna and neighbouring areas in the period 11-12 August. Stewart said that 'our intelligence system was badly at fault', and that it seemed clear, however, 'that the student class were the moving spirits though leading Congressmen like Jagat Narain Lal, an ex-Parliamentary Secretary, fostered the spirit of violence.'

146. For situation reports sent on 18 August and 19 August 1942, see TOP, II, Nos. 579, 586, and 587.

147. Of reports sent in the period 20 to 31 August 1942, see in TOP, II, the following Nos. 592, 613, 616, 654, and 656.

148. Of reports sent in the first week of September 1942, see TOP, II, Nos. 667, 675, 680, 698, 701, 702.

149. Of situation reports sent in the period from 10 September to 31 December 1942, see the following: in TOP, II, 725 and 745; and in TOP, III, Nos. 101 and 191. For Amery's telegram, 31 December 1942, see TOP, III, 304.

See Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 337-8, for statistics connected with Congress Disturbances for the period ending 31 December 1943 (Source: National Archives, Home Dept. Pol. (I), 3/52/43, Pt. 1 and Pt. 2.) In 1942, police fired on 601 occasions; of these the highest number, 226, was credited to Bombay. The number of fatal casualties inflicted by firing was 763; of these 207 were in the United Provinces and 116 in Bihar. The number of non-fatal casualties inflicted by firing was 1,941; of these 508 were in Bihar, 458 in the UP, and 406 in Bombay. Police suffered 63 fatal casualties; of these 26 were in Bihar and 16 in the UP. Police suffered 2,012 non-fatal casualties; of these 563 were in Bombay, 342 in Bihar, and 333 in the UP. Total number of police stations or outposts etc. destroyed or severely damaged was 208.

For a vivid account of a furious, determined, and planned mob attack on a police station, see extract from R.H. Niblett's, *The Congress Rebellion in Azamgarh, August-September 1942*, in Stephen Henningham, 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces: the Dual Revolt', and Henningham's analysis of the revolt, in Ranjit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 131-7. In the same work, see on pp. 165-72, full extract from report submitted by Begusarai Subdivisional Officer, 7

December 1942, Bihar State Archives, Freedom Movement Papers, File 45, 1945. The Begusarai SDO's report indicated what was probably the pattern of the disturbances in many other areas also in Bihar and the eastern UP: 'the school students started the movement: they were joined by all sections of Congress workers: the sober section of Congress tried to keep the movement under control, but when they allow[ed] village mass to join, it became an economic question: the vast properties specially foodgrains at the railway station attract[ed] them. Then the situation was no longer in the hands of the Congress.' After the arrival of troops, the control of the situation became easier for the administration, but another problem arose: 'the control over the military against excesses'.

150. See *TOP*, III, No. 357 and n. 3 to No. 597.
151. *TOP*, III, No. 597.
152. *TOP*, III, No. 617.
153. *TOP*, II, No. 697.
154. *TOP*, III, Nos. 94, 97.
155. Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 295-6.
156. The Sikhs and the Jats were supporting the ministry of Sikander Hayat Khan. In 1942 they feared that the British Government might make a declaration on Pakistan to please Jinnah who was supporting the government's policy of crushing the Congress. The government did not make any declaration on Pakistan, nor did the government encourage the Akali talk of Khalistan, or Sikhistan. Linlithgow wrote to Amery on 5 September 1942 that there were no circumstances he could think of in which it would be practical politics to consider any sort of 'Sikhistan' in the Punjab. 'The Hindus have made the mistake of taking Jinnah seriously about Pakistan, and as a result they have given substance to a shadow. Let us be warned by their example and avoid doing the same to a far more preposterous claim!' See *TOP*, II, 701.
157. On 19 September 1942, Allah Baksh wrote to Linlithgow of his decision to renounce the titles of Khan Bahadur and O.B.E. See *TOP*, III, No. 62, n. 4.
In *TOP*, II, No. 665, see Allah Baksh to Linlithgow, letter dt. Karachi 31 August 1942. Allah Baksh protested against the policy of repression of the Congress, saying that there was no political party in this country which believed that the British had ever seriously desired to free India, and that repression would drive political discontent underground and harm the cause of the Allies.
158. *TOP*, III, No. 43.
159. See Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 310-1.
160. See in Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 612-4, for the 12-Point Instruction from the AICC, August 1942, intercepted by the Bombay police. See in Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 319-29 for a discussion on Congress responsibility for the disturbances in which the author suggests: 'Had Gandhi remained free, the consequences might have been equally serious for British Rule, but events would certainly have developed differently.' From the Government of India's view, the con-

sequences would have been far more serious for the administration in 1942 had Gandhi remained free to conduct a Quit India campaign.

161. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII. pp. 609-10.
162. *Ibid.*, pp. 606-7.
163. See TOP, II, No. 407, for the condensed version prepared by the Government of the Andhra Circular. For full text of the Circular, see Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 595-7. Regani, *Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh*, p. 148, says that the Andhra Circular, popularly known as the Kurnool Circular, was drafted by Kala Venkat Rao and was sent for the approval of the CWC through Pattabhi Sitaramayya. See TOP, III, No. 58 for full translation of the revised Andhra Circular forwarded by Linlithgow to Amery, 3 October 1942. Obviously the revised Andhra Circular was in Telegu and it was issued by the Congress underground workers. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Kaleswara Rao, Prakasam, Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy, Ananthasayanam Iyengar, and V.V. Giri, were among the eminent Congressmen rounded up and detained in jail, soon after anti-Congress operations started in August 1942. Acharya Ranga was in the underground for some time till the police found him. Nivarti Venkatasubbayya of Kurnool went underground in 1942 and surrendered to the authorities in 1944 on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi. See in Regani, cited above, p. 148.
164. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III. Pt. VII, pp. 614-5.
165. See in Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 274-7, extracts from underground circulars, and *ibid.*, pp. 292-5, on the activities of nationalist teachers, like Radhe Shyam Sharma and Kaushalya Nand Gairola of the Banaras Hindu University, who had gone underground in August 1942. In Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, see in AICC, G-26, Pts. 2-4, pp. 361-3, a copy of 'A.I.C.C. Appeal to Students No. 3' issued after nine weeks of the outbreak; and in p. 365, a copy of 'Appeal No. 4 to the Businessmen' dt. 20-8-42. The Appeal to the Businessmen said: 'Since Gandhiji's arrest nearly a thousand persons have died, over 5,000 have been wounded and nearly 30,000 arrested. This is all in one week. Virtual martial law prevails all over the country. The revolution is on. The end will come with a spontaneous uprising of the people or with foreign invasion or with Gandhiji's fast.' The Businessmen were requested: 'Suspend all business particularly war business.'
166. For Jawaharlal's Confidential Note, 24 July 1942, See SWJN, XII, pp. 415-18.
167. TOP, II, No. 668, n. 2
168. For extracts from Jayaprakash's letter of January 1943, see Lakshmi Narain Lal, *Jayaprakash Rebel Extraordinary* (New Delhi, 1975), pp. 103-7.
169. See Lal, *Jayaprakash*, pp. 108-9, 120.
170. Manmathnath Gupta, *History of the Indian Revolutionary Movement* (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 187-91. Sitaramayya, *Congress*, II, p. 377, quotes Government figures for incidents in Tamluk and Contai divisions. For instance, 43 police and other government buildings were burnt by Congress people, and 31 Congress houses were burnt by the government. Con-

gress people burnt 38 private buildings, and 164 private houses were burnt by government.

171. For an evidence of youth interest in terrorist activity in 1942, see in Regani, *Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh*, pp. 157-9, Information on the National Youth League branch at Vijayawada.
172. There was a general expectation among anti-British people in 1942 that Subhas Chandra Bose would do something big and stirring in the fight for freedom. Lal, *Jayaprakash*, pp. 107-8, quotes a letter from Rambriksh Benipuri to a friend: 'At night, we mistook every star for one of Subhas Babu's planes.'
173. 'There was a time when we of the August Revolt thought and felt like Gods. . . . We know ours is the voice of lost souls that championed a lost cause,' wrote Aruna Asaf Ali, one of the central figures of the Congress underground in 1942-44, to Gandhiji on 23 March 1945. She represented well the fiery Congress youth of 1942. Gandhiji recognized that their struggle had been 'full of romance and heroism'. With him, however, secrecy was a sin in the application of non-violence. Gandhiji had asked Aruna in a letter of June 1944 to come out and surrender herself to the authorities and win the prize offered for her arrest. Further: 'Reserve the prize money for the Harijan cause.' For extracts from Aruna Asaf Ali's correspondence, see Hutchins, *Spontaneous Revolution*, pp. 334-6.
174. TOP, II, No. 577.
175. See TOP, II, No. 572. Also, TOP, II, No. 592; in this report to Amery, dt. 20 August 1942, Linlithgow said that the Madras governor had described the attacks and interferences with communications etc. in Ramnad, Madura, Tanjore, Guntur, Kistna and Godavari districts as having been really violent revolutionary outbreaks.
176. TOP, II, No. 625.
177. TOP, II, No. 672.
178. TOP, II, No. 356.
179. See in Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 657-8, Gandhiji's letter to Roger Lumley, Governor of Bombay, dt. 10 August 1942.
180. TOP, II, No. 553.
181. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 214-6.
182. See in TOP, III, Nos. 305, 353, 358, 369.
183. See in TOP, III, Nos. 369, 421, 440.
184. In Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, See pp. 204-5, for extract from the *Times*, London, 11 February 1943; pp. 209-10, for Rajaji's statement, Madras, 11 February 1943; pp. 206 and 215 for an event of contemporary popular interest: Professor Bhansali, who had terminated on 12 January 1943 his 63-day fast (a public penance for mob atrocities in the Central Provinces against policemen), commenced at Wardha another fast on hearing of Mahatma Gandhi's fast in prison. Bhansali broke his fast on 13 February 1943 (after 58 hrs of commencing it) in response to the request of the inmates of Sevagram who urged that nothing should be done to cause anxiety to Gandhiji. See in TOP, III, No. 646, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's letter to the viceroy dt. Ahmednagar Fort, 13 February 1943, in which the Congress president commented on the Gandhi-

Linlithgow correspondence printed in the newspapers. Maulana Azad said: 'Your charge that the Congress had organized a secret movement of violence is wholly false and without foundation.'

185. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 224-8, for Assembly proceedings, and p. 207 for Shyama Prasad Mookerjee's statement. Shyama Prasad worked hard in 1942-3 to break the constitutional deadlock. For his work in September 1942 and approach to the viceroy for permission to see Congress leaders in jail, See *TOP*, II, No. 741.
186. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 222-3 for Joshi's speech; p. 218, for Mahasabha's Resolution 14 February 1943, and pp. 229, 262-3, 282, for appeals to Government from various bodies and persons to release Gandhiji.
187. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
188. *Ibid.*, pp. 287-8 give H.P. Mody's statement on his resignation, New Delhi, 24 February 1943; and pp. 308-9, for N.R. Sarkar's statement, Calcutta, Indian Journalists Association, 4 March 1943: 'Gandhiji is the one man in India today who could be expected to bring together all parties and sections, notwithstanding the welter of confusion and cleavage and differences that now exist.'
189. *Ibid.*, pp. 315-6, see Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy's speech, Darbhanga Hall, Calcutta University, 7 March 1943, on Mahatma Gandhi's epic fast: 'The whole fast was in the nature of a religious ceremony.'
190. Home Dept. Pol. (I), 44/6/42, p. 78. The manuscript is in Linlithgow's hand (signed L) and in red ink. For accounts of sufferings of political prisoners in jail in 1942-3, see Manmathanath Gupta, *Indian Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 223-6. 'A' and 'B' Class prisoners usually escaped gross physical torture in jail. The jail authorities in 1942-43 had plenty of embarrassment caused by superior class prisoners also. See in *TOP*, III, No. 598, Linlithgow to Amery, 18 March 1943, quoted report of Governor Lewis of Orissa dated 13 March: 'The Congress attitude is absurd. All Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly now under detention have sent in demands to attend the Session and to move no-confidence motions. These have of course been withheld. On the other hand all Congress Members of the Legislative Assembly not under detention who can attend decline to attend.'
191. See *TOP*, II, No. 617, Linlithgow to Amery, 24 August 1942; it also mentions of 'our indebtedness to them' (the police).
192. *TOP*, II, No. 566 and Appendix 2 to it.
193. Kunte, *Sources Gandhi*, Vol. III, Pt. VII, pp. 254-5.

Chapter VII

The Nation In Ferment

Sarojini Regani

From 'Quit India' to Cabinet Mission

AFTER THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT the entire Indian sub-continent was seen to be seething with discontent. All the Congress leaders were in jail. Mahatma Gandhi, feeling unhappy over the violent nature of the Quit India Movement at some of the places, undertook a fast in the Aga Khan Palace on 13 February 1943, and as an expiation for the situation created by the Quit India resolution.¹ His condition became critical after 13 days of fasting. The physicians attending on him insisted that Gandhiji should be immediately released as he was likely to collapse within the next 24 hours but the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, was unmoved by this plea and would not agree. He convened an emergency meeting of the Viceroy's Executive Council and felt satisfied that the majority voted in favour of his decision. However, three members of the Viceroy's Council, M.S. Aney, H.P. Mody and N.R. Sarkar, voted against the move of the viceroy and resigned in protest against his attitude. A non-party conference was held in Delhi, in which, of course, the Muslim League did not participate. At this conference a resolution demanding the release of Gandhiji was adopted but the viceroy was adamant. It is said that he was so callous that, anticipating the death of Gandhiji, he ordered that sufficient quantities of sandalwood be collected in the Aga Khan palace for cremation of Gandhiji if the worst should happen. Gandhiji, however, contrary to the expectations of his physicians and the viceroy, came through the ordeal successfully, and Lord Linlithgow did not have the satisfaction of cremating Gandhiji.

Another factor that greatly influenced the political thinking of the people during this period was the Bengal Famine of 1943 which was a great blot on the British administration. This famine wiped out a million and a half of the population of Bengal. This calamity occurred mainly due to the lack of proper statistics with the government, in addition to bad communications and the pressure on the railway for military traffic,

with the result that proper food supplies could not be sent to the drought-hit areas. The situation was worsened due to hoarding of food and other essential commodities by unscrupulous traders. Black-marketing and black-marketeers played havoc. The government failed to cope with the situation. Coupled with the famine, there were also during this period in Bengal, bad harvests, cyclone and floods.

On account of the war the usual supply of rice from Burma could not be procured. The government could have solved the problem had it imported food grains, but Britain was too preoccupied with the war to spare the shipping necessary for this. The Bengal Famine Enquiry Commission, in its report in September 1945, squarely placed the blame on the government for failing to protect the lives of such a large mass of unfortunate people. It expressed its astonishment at the complete moral and social breakdown that became so patent during the famine and also the lack of a feeling of responsibility on the part of the government that might have urged it to do something to save the starving population. The great Bengal Famine of 1943 left an indelible impression of animosity against the British in the minds of the people. It is against this bleak background that Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy, left India in 1943. Field Marshal Sir Archibald Wavell took charge as the new viceroy in October 1943.

After his fast of 1943, Gandhiji did not fully recover his health, and, in April 1944, he fell seriously ill. The Civil Surgeon at Poona declared that Gandhiji was not likely to survive his illness. The British Government decided thereupon not to risk his death in jail. Another factor that influenced the British decision during this period was the role of the Indian National Army. The INA, under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, had participated in a Japanese offensive on India's north-east frontier and were in control of 51,000 sq. miles of Indian territory, comprising Manipur and Aishevpur. The British hoped that Gandhiji's release would create sufficient goodwill among Indians to induce them to co-operate with the British in facing the new threat arising out of the action of the Indian National Army and its ally, Japan. Yet the government would not take prompt steps to release Gandhiji and other Congress leaders, since the Mahatma would not withdraw the 8 August Resolution.

So Indo-British relations continued to remain deadlocked as the Congress refused to recant in the matter of the August resolution of 1942. The British held the Indian National Congress solely responsible for the disturbances of 1942-43. The government had brought out a White Paper in February 1943, entitled 'On the Congress Party's Responsibility for the Disturbances in India, 1942-43', in which it squarely blamed the Congress for the disturbances and this paper was

presented to the British Parliament by L.S. Amery, Secretary of State for India, in March 1943. Some Members of Parliament, however, pleaded with the Secretary of State at least to allow non-party leaders like Messrs Sapru and Rajagopalachari to meet Gandhiji in jail to persuade him to give up his fast and also to enable them to solve the Indian deadlock in consultation with Gandhi.² To this Amery replied that the matter of allowing the non-party leaders to meet Gandhiji was left to the discretion of the Indian Government, while the viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, refused to consider the question of anyone meeting Gandhi and other leaders in jail unless Gandhi expressed his regret for the August disturbances. Thus the attempts of the British Labour MPs like S.O. Davies and Reginald Sorensen and the efforts of the non-party leaders to take steps to solve the deadlock did not bear fruit.

The Growth of the Muslim League

As a result of the suppression of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League made rapid advances, and League Ministries were established in Assam in August 1942, in Sind in October 1942, in Bengal in March 1943 and in the North West Frontier Province in May 1943. The League Central Leadership was exercising a tight control over provincial units and was raising a volunteer corps (the National Guards). Jinnah himself demanded recognition as the sole spokesman of the Muslims with a right to be treated on equal terms with Gandhiji, the spokesman of the Hindus, as he described him. The British also facilitated the growth of the Muslim League and League Ministries could function in Assam and the North West Frontier Province mainly because the Congress MLAs were in jail.

The Allah Baksh ministry of Sind which was pro-Congress, was dismissed by the governor because he renounced titles conferred on him by the British. In Bengal, the European MLAs were the main support of the Nazimuddin ministry belonging to the Muslim League. The Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal gave enough trouble to Jinnah but the central leadership of the League was able to oust Fazal-ul Huq who had formed a coalition in December 1941 with the help of the Hindu Mahasabha leader, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. The death of Sikander Hayat Khan in December 1942 enabled the Muslim League to penetrate deeply into the Punjab and threaten the Muslim-Jat Unionist Coalition Ministry under Khizar Hayat Khan.

The League was able to catch the imagination of the Indian Muslims by representing to the Muslims of Punjab and Bengal that the creation of Pakistan would mean the end of the Hindu zamindars, and of exploitation at the hands of Hindu banias. It also promised to encourage small Muslim business classes at the cost of the Hindu business

community. This had an appeal to Muslim professional groups and politicians in provinces like UP and Bombay where Muslims were in a minority. The League began to put forward the theory of Muslim separatism and Muslim nationality and appealed to the community not to regard themselves as Sindhis, Baluchis, Punjabis, Pathans etc, but just as Muslims.

In the meanwhile, pressure was growing on the Indian Government from all sides for the release of Gandhiji and other national leaders who were in jail. Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, in his press conference at Lahore on 2 January 1944, discussing the Bengal Famine said: '... we maintain along with the rest of the Nationalist India that food should not be made a sport of politics, but we are convinced, economic problem cannot be tackled unless the political deadlock is solved.' Dr Khan Sahib, ex-Prime Minister of the North-West Frontier Province, declared at a press conference in Lahore on 3 January that those who talk of withdrawing the August 1942 resolution of the Congress were hirelings of the British Government.

On 4 January, the University Labour Federation in London, at its annual conference, demanded a change in the policy of the British Government towards India. It also passed a resolution saying: '... in view of the grave crisis in India, we demand all possible measures for relief, the removal of Mr Amery from office, the release of Indian leaders and the right of the Indian people to choose their own Government.'³ Thus it appeared that the Labour leaders in Britain were sympathetic towards India in general. In response to the Labour Party's demand, Lord Amery, the Secretary of the State for India, declared that Britain was ready to offer India what it had offered through Sir Stafford Cripps and that he considered it a very generous offer. The next day, on 10 January 1944, the Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, while addressing the members of the All India Newspapers Editors' Conference in Madras appealed to the press 'to consider it as their foremost duty to give no rest to the government until they released Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru' in order that 'The Voice of India might be raised to defence of the future not only of India but the whole world'.⁴ Shortly after this, on 20 January, the British Government appointed Sir Feroz Khan Noon, as the Defence Minister in the Governor General's Council in India and as the representative of India in the British War Cabinet. Though Feroz Khan Noon was not a true representative of India, and if at all he represented anybody, it was the British Government, yet the nomination of an Indian to the War Cabinet showed that Britain was attempting to appease the growing public pressure by cosmetic changes as in its attitude.

In the meanwhile, in the Central Legislature at Delhi, then known as the House of Assembly, one Lalchand Naval Rai moved a resolution on

8 February calling for the release of all political prisoners in order to solve the prevailing political deadlock, and for furthering the war effort. To this Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member of the Governor General's Executive Council, replied that the house should assure the government that the result of the release of political prisoners would be beneficial to India as well as to the war effort.⁵ To this, Abdul Qayyum, a Congress member, replied that the Congress members of the legislature would not ask or beg for the release of the Congress leaders. He added, '... there can be no question of withdrawal of the August Resolution of 1942. If there is going to be any withdrawal, it will have to be done by the Government. There can be no retreat, you can keep these gentlemen in jail as long as you like.' Thus the Naval Rai resolution could not be passed in the Central Assembly.

In the meantime, on 17 February 1944, Lord Wavell, the new viceroy, convened a joint session of the two houses of the legislature in Delhi where he declared that it was futile to demand the release of the political leaders and that, for the time being, the country would be run by the British and the Indians, with the ultimate responsibility remaining with the British Parliament, and that governmental responsibilities would be exercised through the Viceroy's Executive Council until such time as a fresh constitution was drawn up for India. Commenting on the Muslim League demand for Pakistan, Wavell said, '... you cannot alter geography. From the point of view of defence, internal and external economic problems, India is a natural unit.' Secondly that the two communities (Hindus and Muslims) could co-exist within one state. At the same time, Wavell reiterated the oft-repeated British theme that, until the Hindus and Muslims agreed, there could be no political settlement in India. He did not want to release the Congress leaders until he was convinced that the Congress had withdrawn its policy of non-cooperation with the British Government.⁶

Wavell, apparently, did not want India to be partitioned. This was in keeping with the hitherto declared policy of the British who always highlighted the basic differences in the views of Hindus and Muslims towards India's independence in order to give a legitimacy to their stay in India. Reacting to the statement of the viceroy, Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, while addressing the All India Aryan Congress at New Delhi, expressed his happiness at Wavell's statement that India was a single unit politically, economically and culturally and that it should remain a single unit. The All India Aryan Congress also condemned the idea of Pakistan and expressed its opposition to any proposals that envisaged the division of India. In response to this, a month later, while addressing the Punjab Muslim Students' Federation at Lahore on 19 March 1944, Jinnah reacted to Lord Wavell's address saying that there

had been geographical changes in the past and asked 'what about the Suez and Panama Canal, Spain and Portugal, Sweden and Norway, Sudan and Egypt?' Next, he declared, if the British Government wanted to give freedom let it be to Pakistan and Hindustan.

2. The Gandhi-Wavell Correspondence

Kasturba Gandhi died on 22 February 1944, when she, along with Gandhiji, was in jail at the Aga Khan Palace in Poona. In spite of this tragedy, Gandhiji started corresponding with the viceroy saying that the government should appoint an impartial tribunal to investigate the respective stands taken by the Congress Party and the Indian Government so that the truth might be brought out, and suggested that any meaningful participation in the war-effort on the part of Indians would be possible only when their demands were met. Wavell replied to Gandhiji, referring to his inaugural speech on 15 February 1944, and conveyed his sympathies on the passing away of Kasturba. This meant that there was no change in the basic attitude of the government towards the Congress Party. In the meanwhile, the British Government added one more member to the Viceroy's Executive Council, namely, the Maharaja of Kashmir, to represent India on the War Cabinet along with Feroz Khan Noon. Commenting on this, Gandhiji wrote to the viceroy on 9 March 1944 that, in spite of these appointments, the Executive Council of the Viceroy did not represent the people of India as these members were not chosen by the free vote of the people of India.⁷ The viceroy replied on 20 March 1944 suggesting that the Congress should co-operate with the government if it was to develop self-government, and once again reiterated the British stand, as declared in the Draft Resolution of 1942. To this Gandhiji replied saying that it was now high time that you co-operate with the people of India through their elected representatives instead of expecting co-operation from them.⁸ He further said that the violence that followed the Quit India Movement was not because of any basic defect in the policies of the Congress but due to the hasty action of the government in arresting the leaders. He complained that the Indian Government in dealing with the Congress and other political leaders had combined in its person the role of the prosecutor, judge and gaoler in the same person, thus making proper defence impossible on the part of the accused. He declared that 'unless there is a change of heart on the part of the Government, he was prepared to remain as a prisoner of the Government'.⁹ It was thus clear that neither Gandhiji nor the viceroy were prepared to budge from their respective stands.

3. Indian Public Opinion on the Political Stalemate

While the deadlock continued, the Federation of Indian Chambers of

Commerce under the chairmanship of Kumararaja Sir Muthiah Chettiar met at New Delhi on 4 March 1944. In his presidential address Chettiar declared that, 'whatever might have been the justification for detaining these leaders, I feel time has come for the Government to release them. . .'¹⁰ He pressed upon the authorities the need for forming a national government in which all important political groups and interests would be included. Ten days after this meeting, the eighth All India Kisan Sabha Conference met at Vijayawada under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. It passed a resolution on 15 March 1944 demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other members of the Working Committee. Regarding the formation of a national government, it declared: 'The Sabha is convinced that the release of the leaders would create an atmosphere favourable to the achievement of national unity and for the setting up of a National Composite Government enjoying the confidence of the people.'¹¹ At London, Mr Sorensen, Labour Member of the British Parliament, drew the attention of Amery to the presidential address of Muthiah Chettiar. Meanwhile, the National Peace Council, a federation of about 40 separate organizations in London, declared, on 25 March 1944, that 'self-government for India is among conditions which must be fulfilled if the goal of the war throughout the world is to be achieved.'¹² Three days later, on 20 March, the Indian Christians met in Madras under the chairmanship of V. Chakkrai Chettiar. In this meeting, resolutions were passed demanding the release of the national leaders and the setting up of a national government at the centre and in the provinces.

Even the Non-Party leaders who met at Lucknow on 7 April 1944 demanded the release of the leaders. Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Non-Party leaders said that 'the first step towards settlement in India has to be taken by the British . . . it involves the release of the Congress leaders, removal of the control by the India Office and the declaration of transferring real power to a representative national government at the centre. . .'. He said further that the much-wanted British statesmanship was dead as far as India was concerned. All that could be done, he suggested, was to mobilize public opinion against the continuance of the present system and try to put so much pressure that even their present irresponsible government might not be able to ignore it and that Britain might be forced to reconcile with India in her own interests.¹³ He appealed to Lord Wavell to revise his attitude towards the Congress and make it possible for all political parties to assist the viceroy in the formation of a truly national government. At this conference, Tej Bahadur Sapru, in his capacity as its president, declared that a national conference could be convened only if Gandhiji and other leaders were released. In one of its resolutions the

conference called for the restoration of the legislatures in the five provinces of Madras, Bombay, UP, Bihar and the Central Provinces. In another resolution moved by Hriday Nath Kunzru on 8 April, it was demanded that the Governor General's Executive Council should be reconstituted as a true National Government with a Prime Minister. Tej Bahadur Sapru, while winding up the proceedings, attacked the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, for his die-hardism, saying that the non-party conference would have no effect on Churchill's mind as he was an uncompromising opponent of India's progress. However, he appealed to Indians to give Lord Wavell every chance to solve the deadlock. In conclusion he said, 'to keep Mahatma Gandhi shut up indefinitely without trial by a Tribunal was nothing short of coercion.' He further declared that if Gandhiji was released he would definitely lend all his weight to bringing about a settlement.

The Lucknow, non-parties conference was followed by another in London called the Conference of the Co-operative Party which met on 8 April 1944, under the chairmanship of Mr Alfred Barnes, a Labour MP. It too passed a resolution demanding the release of all anti-fascist political prisoners in India.¹⁴ Two days later, on 10 April, the Commonwealth Conference met in London and reiterated the demand for the release of Gandhi as a step towards solving the existing deadlock.

On 17 April, a meeting was organized by the 'Free India Now' movement in London, in which a resolution was passed stating '... this meeting of Indians and British sympathisers in view of the present crisis demands an immediate and unconditional release of all political leaders in order that they may take a lead in forming a national government on the basis of complete independence of India.'

Thus we find that during the months of March and April 1944, all major Indian political parties, groups, and interests (except the Muslim League) and also the British Labour Party and the National Peace Council, demanded two things, namely, that in order to solve the political deadlock in India the Indian political leaders who were in prison should be immediately and unconditionally released, particularly the Congress leaders who were in prison since August 1942; secondly, the formation of a national government. Some of the Congress leaders who had been released met in a conference in Lucknow on 15 and 16 April 1944 and confirmed their faith in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee who were behind the bars. At the same time these Congress members made it clear, in a resolution moved by K.N. Katju, that the Congress party stood against all aggression, be it from Japan, Germany or Italy and that it was committed to the defence of the country.

British Parliamentary Debates on India

The British Parliament also evinced keen interest in India and the members, particularly those who belonged to the Labour Party, were anxious to see restoration of normalcy in India. The Labour MP, R. Sorensen, in course of the parliamentary debate on 18 April 1944, squarely blamed Amery for the stalemate that was created in India by the British Government's attitude towards the 1942 movement. Amery replied that, if the Congress and other parties had accepted the Cripps offer, parliamentary government in the provinces would have been automatically restored. Pethick Lawrence, another Labour MP, who later came to India as a member of the Cabinet Mission, also blamed the British Government and Amery for their inept handling of the Indian situation. He criticized Amery saying that his speech concerning Indian affairs was one of the most provocative on the subject he had ever had the misfortune to listen to in the House.¹⁵ Sorensen, in the course of his speech, disagreed with Amery when the latter stated that the August disturbances of 1942 were instigated by the Congress, and protested against Amery's remarks that the Indian National Congress was totalitarian in its outlook. He blamed the British Government, saying that 'it was a shocking state of affairs that for the third time in five out of 11 provinces in India including the most important provinces of Madras and Bombay, the House was to accept in what virtually was despotic government at a time when the allies were waging a war for the reverse principles.'¹⁶

While the British Conservative Party was determined to blame the Indian National Congress for the disturbances of August 1942 and the continuance of governor's rule in the five provinces where Congress Ministries had held office till 1939, the British Labour Party was determined to disprove this theory. This attitude of the Labour Party helped India to achieve independence by August 1947.

The House of Lords, on 18 April 1944, agreed to the proposal to continue the existing pattern of the Government of India for a further period of 12 months, i.e., the proclamations issued under Section 93 of Government of India Act 1935 in respect of the provinces of Madras, Bombay, UP, CP and Bihar. But centering on the resolution moved by Emmanuel Shinwell, another Labour MP, the House of Commons which held a debate on Commonwealth Co-operation and Unity on 21 and 22 April 1944, once again reiterated that the United Kingdom should do its utmost to get the co-operation of the different nations of the Commonwealth by giving due regard to their viewpoints in order to preserve peace, unity of purpose and the sentiments which had held all the Commonwealth nations together. Shinwell also wanted India to be represented in the proposed Council of the Prime Ministers of the

British Commonwealth, because India, he said, should be given the status of a dominion immediately after the war. This the Conservative Member of Parliament, Herbert Williams, countered with the argument, '... how can you make a Dominion of a country which is terrorised by the worst aristocracy in the world — the Brahmin Class? You can promise anything you like; there is none to give it.'¹⁷ Reacting to this statement, Percy Harris asked whether the House of Commons was going back on the offer of Dominion Status to India? To this the former replied: 'Of course we are not going back on anything but when you say you offer something to somebody, there must be somebody who can take delivery.' During these debates on the issue of Empire and Commonwealth Unity, Churchill at one stage made it clear that this conference would be a meeting of Prime Ministers of the dominions among whom, he hoped India would also be represented. Thus the British Parliamentary debates clearly reflected the keen interest that the British Labour Party took in the cause of India's freedom and their anxiety to solve the Indian deadlock.

5. The Release of Mahatma Gandhi and his Strivings for Congress League Understanding

The Conference or the Council of the Dominion Prime Ministers met in London under the presidentship of Winston Churchill from 1 to 16 May. On behalf of India, Feroz Khan Noon and the Maharaja of Kashmir attended the conference as Members of the Viceroy's Council. While the conference was in session, Mahatma Gandhi was released, on 6 May 1944 at 8 p.m., unconditionally.

Gandhiji, it might be recalled, had lost Kasturba Gandhi on 27 February 1944 and his health had also deteriorated considerably. On 13 April 1944, Japan had made an advance towards India. Dr B.C. Roy, who was attending on Gandhiji, had expressed concern about the setback in Gandhiji's health and the government was perturbed by the report. On 4 May, N.N. Sarkar, Badri Das Goenka, B.P. Singh Roy, G.D. Birla and N.R. Sarkar telegraphically appealed to the Private Secretary to Lord Wavell to release Mahatma Gandhi in view of his continued illness which was causing serious anxiety all over the country. Finally, on 6 May, the government, yielding to the public opinion, issued a press communique announcing his release. Gandhiji had spent one year nine months and 27 days in the Yeravada (Pune) Jail. During this period, in addition to Kasturba, he lost his private secretary and close companion, Mahadev Desai on 15 August 1942. Several Indian leaders like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya expressed their appreciation of the British gesture in releasing Gandhiji. Malaviyaji declared that the Mahatma 'ought not to have been arrested at all' and that the Government had set right a gross act of injustice.¹⁸ The Azad Muslim Conference, a body

opposed to the idea of Pakistan, in a resolution on 8 May 1944 in New Delhi also expressed its relief at the unconditional release of Gandhiji and prayed for his early recovery so that he might once again resume his services to the cause of India's freedom. The Council of International Recognition of India's Independence also expressed its happiness at the release of Gandhiji on 9 May 1944. The same day, the war with Germany came to an end.

Gandhi-Jinnah Correspondence

Gandhiji, even while in prison, had written a letter to Mohammad Ali Jinnah suggesting a personal meeting so that they could talk face to face instead of corresponding in order to establish communal unity in India and to find a common solution for the problem of India's independence. This letter was published on 18 May, after Gandhiji's release. The move was welcomed by several leaders including Allama Mashriqui, the Khaksar leader, who wrote a letter to Jinnah on 9 May asking him to explore the possibility of the Muslim League and the Congress coming to an understanding regarding India's future. He also appealed to Gandhiji to come to a settlement to which the Mahatma telegraphically replied that he was prepared to meet the Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah and discuss the question of Hindu-Muslim understanding. The Labour members of the British Parliament also appealed to Amery, the Secretary of State for India, on 20 May 1944, to create a favourable atmosphere for Gandhiji and Jinnah to meet and to enable them to hold free discussions and come to some agreement that would lead to the formation of a national government in India. They also asked Amery to release the other Congress leaders. Dr Khan Saheb, the ex-Prime Minister of the North-West Frontier Province, and Nawab Iftekar Hossain of Mamdot, the President of the Punjab Muslim League, also expressed their happiness at Gandhiji's release and their fervent hope that Gandhiji and Jinnah might come to an agreement to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem in India.¹⁹

In the meanwhile, a group of Labour Members of Parliament once again appealed to Amery to release the other Congress leaders so that they could have free discussions with Gandhi and Jinnah to which Amery replied adamantly: 'Mr Gandhi's release is not effected with the intention of releasing other Congress leaders.'²⁰ The Council of National Liberal Federation at this juncture met in Poona on 18 June and appealed to the viceroy to release the Congress political prisoners unconditionally, particularly those who were not found guilty of violence. It also appealed to the Indian National Congress to consider the Quit India resolution of April 1942 a dead letter and come to an understanding with other political parties, so that a provisional government could be formed.

Gandhiji, on his part, appealed to the viceroy, on 30 June, to allow him to consult the Congress Working Committee members in order to solve the political deadlock. But Wavell refused to comply, saying that, as long as he and the Congress party adhered to the Quit India resolution, there was no possibility of the viceroy allowing Gandhi to see the imprisoned leaders. Gandhiji wrote to the viceroy: 'I could do little or nothing unless I know the mind of the Working Committee of the Congress. I pleaded as a prisoner for permission to see them; I now plead as a free man for such a permission.'²¹ He also wanted to meet the viceroy in this connection. But the latter refused to meet him. Thus the viceroy and Gandhiji stuck to their original positions. C. Rajagopalachari, who had left the Congress Party over the Quit India resolution and also on the issue of the Muslim claim to self-determination, had kept in active touch with Gandhiji. So, at this juncture, after taking prior permission of Gandhiji, Rajaji opened correspondence with Jinnah from New Delhi saying that he had a formula for a settlement between the Muslim League and the Congress. He also added that Gandhi had approved his formula as early as March 1943.

Rajagopalachari Formula

Rajagopalachari enunciated his formula as follows:

- (1) The formation of a joint provisional Government by the Muslim League and the Congress during the transitional period after the termination of the war.
- (2) Setting up of a Boundary Commission to separate Muslim majority provinces through a plebiscite, if necessary, and that a plebiscite should be held on the basis of adult suffrage to decide about the issue of separation.
- (3) Opinion of the various political parties should be taken into view before holding such a plebiscite.
- (4) As far as Defence, Commerce and Communications were concerned they should be under one single power.
- (5) Any transfer of population that might take place after separation would be only on a voluntary basis.
- (6) These terms would be binding on the Congress and the Muslim League in case of Britain transferring full powers and responsibility to the Government of India.

Jinnah, however, refused to have any direct communication with Rajaji. He questioned his authority to send the proposals, and said that, if Gandhi were to send these proposals, he would place them before the Working Committee of the Muslim League. To this Rajaji in a telegram from Panchgani on 8 July 1944 replied that Gandhiji had approved his formula, and if Jinnah still insisted on a direct proposal from him then it

would be necessary to take the public into confidence before directly approaching Jinnah. Jinnah was adamant and reiterated that he had to place any proposal received on behalf of the Congress before the Working Committee of the League. Rajagopalachari released his correspondence with Jinnah to the press along with the salient features of his formula on 10 July 1944.

Reaction to the Rajaji Formula

Commenting on this K.M. Munshi who did not approve of the Rajaji formula said: '... if Gandhiji had been his normal self physically or if Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar [Patel] were with him, I am sure he would not have had anything to do with Rajaji's formula. He was feeling lonely and the deep void created in his life by the death of Kasturba and Mahadev Desai had affected him'.²² Jinnah, at a later stage, while addressing the Muslim League Council characterized the Pakistan that was offered to him by Rajaji's formula as 'a shadow of husk, maimed, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan.'²³ He totally rejected the formula.

The Sikh leaders, Sardar Santok Singh, Sardar Harnam Singh, and Sardar Joginder Singh, issued a joint statement on 14 July 1944 declaring: 'We strongly protest against this for and on behalf of Sikh community and hereby declare that the Sikhs will fight to the bitter end against the proposals.' Even Dr N.B. Khare, Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, condemned the proposals. V.D. Savarkar, the President of Hindu Mahasabha, in a telegram on 20 July 1944 issued from Bombay, criticized Gandhiji and Rajaji for conceding the idea of Pakistan without consulting the other political parties in India, particularly, the Hindu Mahasabha. Savarkar also asked the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha to observe the first week of August as 'Akhand Hindusthan Week' or 'the Anti-Pakistan Week.' However, the leaders of the National Federation of India, the Nationalist Christian Party of Bombay and even Dr Ambedkar, who was then a Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, liked these proposals as an augury for the formation of a national government. Jinnah himself in his address to the half-yearly session of the Muslim League on 30 July 1944, condemned C.R.'s formula as a parody, a negation of and an attempt to torpedo the Muslim League's resolution of March 1940. However, he wanted Gandhiji to start personal negotiations with him and declared that this formula showed that Gandhiji *in his personal capacity had accepted the principle of the division of India*.²⁴

The All Party Sikhs' Conference assembled in Amritsar on 1 August 1944 under the presidentship of Sardar Baldev Singh, who was the Development Minister in the Viceroy's Executive Council. It declared unanimously that the basis of communal settlement as proposed in

Rajaji's formula and apparently approved by Gandhiji was manifestly unfair and detrimental to the best interests of the country and the Sikh community. Baldev Singh denounced the proposed scheme as breach of faith on the part of the Congress leaders who had assured the Sikhs in their Lahore Session of 1929 that no communal settlement would be acceptable to the Congress which did not satisfy *inter alia* the Sikh community. Once again, on 20 August 1944, under the leadership of Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leaders condemned the Gandhi-Rajaji formula and rejected it saying that, as a result of this, the Sikhs would be divided into sections to be held in perpetual bondage. Thus, the Sikhs in a downright manner rejected the Rajaji formula. The Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, rejected the formula and conveyed their feelings to Gandhiji on 5 August 1944.

Rajagopalachari, who had been striving since 1943 to come to an understanding with Jinnah but had been rebuffed by him, once again came forward. He wanted to win over the Liberal leaders, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Jayakar, to his line of thinking. Sapru, when told by Rajaji that he wanted to hold discussions with Jinnah, tried to dissuade him saying that Jinnah would point blank ask Rajaji, 'Have you any goods to deliver? Whom do you represent? Can you bring the Hindu Mahasabha to any conclusion? Can you come to an understanding on behalf of the Congress?' The Liberals, thus, did not agree with Rajaji's views on Pakistan.

On 13 August 1944, Srinivasa Sastri of the National Liberal Federation, after critically analysing the Rajaji formula, rejected it saying, 'I dread this division of India, I dread it like poison.'²⁵ Rajaji's formula, thus, though it was tentatively accepted by Gandhiji, was opposed by the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha, the All Parties Sikhs' Conference, including the Akali Dal, the Sikh Communist Conference, the All Parties Hindu Conference and the National Liberation Front. Commenting on this Copley comments that, 'in many respects Gandhi had even greater occasion to regret his friendship with Rajaji during 1944 than 1940.' C.R. acted throughout as if he had a mandate from Gandhiji. The evidence, however, suggests that though Gandhiji had agreed to C.R.'s 'formula' as early as March 1943, when they met during Gandhiji's fast, it is hard to resist the conclusion that C.R. took advantage of Gandhi in a moment of weakness.²⁶

In the meanwhile, Members of Parliament in Britain, led by Pethick Lawrence, once again began to press the British Government to release Congress leaders, in view of the necessity of inviting India to form a national government. Pethick Lawrence was ably supported in his demand by other British Labour MPs like Sorensen, and John Schuster, a Liberal.

Gandhi-Jinnah Unity Talks

Gandhiji who had started correspondence with Jinnah even while in prison, now expressed his desire to meet Jinnah personally. He even offered to form a national government during the war in his interview with Steward Gelder, a British Journalist and a Special War Correspondent of the *News Chronicle*. Gelder interviewed Gandhiji on 17 July 1944 at Panchgani for three hours when the latter admitted that he was prepared to advise the Congress to participate in the war-time national government in full control of the civil administration and help the Allies in their war effort. At this juncture, Gandhiji once again opened correspondence with Wavell. He actually wrote to the viceroy on 27 July 1944 that he was prepared to advise the Working Committee of the Congress Party to declare that, in view of the changed conditions, the mass civil disobedience envisaged by the resolution of August 1942 could not be offered, and he said that full co-operation in the war effort could be given by the Congress. He further suggested that a declaration of Indian independence be made, and a national government responsible to the Central Assembly be formed, subject to the proviso that during the pendency of the war, the military operations should continue as at present, but without involving any financial burden on India. To this Wavell replied on 15 August 1944 that he would be prepared to consider the proposal if Gandhiji were to submit a definite and constructive policy, and that the British Government was anxious that a settlement of the Indian problem should be reached, but that under the conditions laid down by Gandhi in his letter on 27 July 1944, it was not possible for him to accept the proposals.²⁷ However, Wavell expressed his willingness to consider the ultimate formation of a national government if all sections of the people were prepared to co-operate in the transitional government. In response to this, Gandhiji, in an interview to the Associated Press on 18 August 1944, said that it was clear that the British were not prepared to give up their power in India unless India developed the strength to wrest it from them. It is against this background that Gandhiji opened correspondence with Jinnah expressing his willingness to meet him, whom he now started calling the Quaid-e-Azam. Jinnah who at this time was relaxing in Srinagar replied saying that he would be glad to receive Gandhi at his Bombay house on his return from Srinagar, and they duly met on 9 September 1944. They once again discussed Rajaji's formula. After their preliminary talks on the first day, Jinnah wrote to Gandhi on 10 September insisting on the following points as an alternative to the Lahore resolution:

- (1) He wanted Gandhiji to negotiate with him not in his individual capacity but as a representative of the Congress Party.

- (2) That the right of self-determination by Indians should be first outlined for bringing about a Hindu-Muslim settlement rather than over the question of achieving independence.

Whereas Gandhi pressed on the priority of independence of India, Jinnah pressed on the priority of Hindu-Muslim settlement. Gandhiji did not agree to the concept of the two nations theory and wrote to Jinnah saying that the Lahore resolution of 23 March 1940 did not make reference to the two-nation theory. He insisted on India achieving freedom first and then deciding, if necessary, on partition. Jinnah stubbornly stuck to the viewpoint that the Muslims were a separate nation and that he regarded the Lahore resolution 'as the road which will lead us all to the achievement of freedom and independence not only to the two major nations (Hindus and Muslims) but to the rest of the peoples of India.' Jinnah further reiterated in his letter on 21 September 1944 to Gandhi '... the right of self-determination which we claim postulates that we are a nation and as such that it will be the self-determination of the Mussalmans and they alone are entitled to exercise that right'. Gandhiji in a touching letter addressed to Jinnah on 22 September, wrote:

... the more I think about the two nations theory, the more alarming it appears to me ... I am unable to accept the proposition that the Muslim inhabitants of India are a nation distinct from the other inhabitants of India, ... the consequences of accepting such a proposition are dangerous in extreme ... I would therefore suggest a way out. Let it be a partition between two brothers, if a division there must be.²⁸

Once again the two leaders met for talks on 22 September but failed to reach an understanding, and Gandhi wrote to Jinnah saying: 'Our talks and our correspondence seem to run in parallel lines and never touch one another. We reached the breaking point last evening but thank God we were unwilling to part.'²⁹ Gandhi reiterated his views on the lines of the Gandhi-Rajaji formula to which Jinnah bluntly replied on 25 September that 'they are a complete bar to any settlement on the basis of division of India as Pakistan and Hindustan'. Gandhi replied the next day saying that he could not accept Jinnah's interpretation of the Lahore resolution, to which Jinnah reacted saying that he could not accept the Gandhi-Rajaji formula or its slightly altered interpretation as given by Gandhiji. Thus, the Gandhi-Jinnah talks which started on 9 September 1944 broke down completely by 28 September 1944. Both the leaders admitted that the communal unity talks had failed.

Gandhiji, who had once called the principle of Pakistan an untruth had by 1944 accepted the principle of Pakistan and even suggested a

mechanism for it. But it is important to note that Gandhi in his letter to Jinnah confessed that he could not envisage the formation of two 'successor' states after the partition as if there was nothing between them except enmity. He could not accept the two-nation theory, and felt that there should be some safeguards provided to prevent building up of armaments and for foiling any contemplated armed conflict between the two states even if the principle of cultural and economic independence was respected. But Jinnah rejected such offers and did not agree to the idea of the district-wise demarcation of boundaries. He wanted nothing short of the six full provinces for Pakistan, even though in two of them, i.e. Punjab and Bengal, the Muslims were only marginally in a majority, while in Assam they were not even in a majority. He wanted the plebiscite and referendum confined only to the Muslims, and did not favour giving the non-Muslim population the right to express their opinion regarding partition. Jinnah did not like the idea of having any common links between India and Pakistan over matters of foreign affairs, defence and commerce. He wanted that partition should take place before the British departed from India and not after.

Commenting on this, B.R. Nanda says:

While these conversations were no more than a kind of a re-education for Gandhi, they brought an accession of political strength to Jinnah. That Gandhiji had knocked at his door raised Jinnah's prestige. The fact that the Mahatma had relented so far as to discuss the machinery for the exercise of the right of self-determination for the Muslims, was a feather in Jinnah's cap.³⁰

The breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks provoked world-wide reactions. Pethick Lawrence, the British Labour MP said: 'I feel sure that I am not poisoning the sentiments of many people in this country [England] in expressing the regret at the news that the two distinguished statesmen of India have not found it possible so far to reach an agreement.'³¹ Pearl S. Buck, a noted American novelist, remarked in New York: 'I consider it as a tragedy for India and England but for all the United Nations.' J.J. Singh, President of the India League in America and in London expressed disappointment at the failure of the talks. While N.R. Sarkar, an ex-member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, significantly said that 'the tragedy of the situation is that there is no means now open to us for retrieving the position since . . . the Congress cannot formally meet to consider the situation resulting from the failure of the talks.' The Liberal leaders like Setalwad and Chandavarkar commented that they did not regret the breakdown of the negotiation because it was based on the vicious principle of the partition of Hindustan and Pakistan.

N.B. Khare of the Hindu Mahasabha, Allama Mashriqi, the Khaksar leader, and M.N. Roy, the Radical Democratic Party leader, hoped that the failure of the talks would lead to a fresh examination of the problem that would enable the Indian leaders to find a practical solution to the problem of achieving the freedom of India and preserving its unity. Various newspapers, like the *Statesman*, wrote that the talks broke down not because of any external interference but because there was no initial agreement between the two. *The Dawn*, which represented the Muslim League point of view, significantly remarked that the failure of the talks clearly showed that Rajagopalachari had not really succeeded in winning over Gandhiji to accepting Pakistan. *The Hindustan Standard* also commented that Mahatma Gandhi, in these talks, clearly showed that he did not accept the two-nation theory and that the Rajaji formula should once for all be given up.

The Hindu Mahasabha leader, Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, felt that in these talks Jinnah came close to making Gandhi agree to the partition of India at least in principle.³² The talks went on for several days, which clearly showed that Gandhi and Jinnah could not agree. The failure of the unity talks was unfortunate because the British Government insisted on agreement between all sections of Indians before independence could be granted.

Reaction to the Failure of the Unity Talks

Even after the failure of Gandhi-Jinnah talks several Indian political groups tried to solve the problem of communal unity in India in their own way. The Standing Committee of the Non-Party Conference appointed a sub-committee to investigate various aspects of the communal and minority questions and to recommend suitable measures for resolving the political stalemate.³³ On 5 December 1944, Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote a letter to K.M. Munshi to send a memorandum to the sub-committee. Munshi wrote to Sapru saying that Jinnah was not likely to attend such a committee meeting, but Sapru insisted on a memorandum being submitted. Mirza Ismail, the then Prime Minister of Jaipur, did not approve of Sapru's initiative, but he wrote a letter to Munshi on 14 December 1944 to the effect that he had seen the viceroy, Lord Wavell, on 26 November 1944 and urged him to take certain steps to resolve the communal problem.³⁴ Mirza Ismail requested the viceroy that, first, the Congress leaders should be released; secondly, that popular rule in the various provinces should be restored under coalition ministries. Thirdly, that a Constitutional Committee should be appointed to draft a constitution for India. He also pleaded for the reorganization of the central government in order to make it more representative and cohesive. Mirza Ismail wanted the Non-Party Conference to back his demands but these leaders felt that the demands

were impracticable.³⁵ However, Munshi sent a memorandum to Sapru, but nothing came of it.

The House of Commons, which met on 5 October 1944, began to press the secretary of the state to ask the viceroy to take the initiative in arriving at an agreement. To this Amery replied that it was for the Indian leaders (Gandhi and Jinnah) to come to an agreement and, pending further developments, the Government of India by taking the initiative could not achieve anything. Reacting to these debates in the Commons, Jinnah declared to a foreign correspondent that there was only one way of resolving Muslim-Hindu differences, and that was, to divide India into sovereign states of Pakistan and Hindustan.³⁶ Against this, Dr Radha Kumud Mukherjee, the president of the Akhand Hindustan Conference which met on 7 October 1944, declared that Pakistan was a totally unacceptable scheme, and the conference passed a resolution saying that the partition of India would be fatal to the best interests of the country as a whole. The 5th All India Akali Sikh Conference under the leadership of Master Tara Singh criticized Gandhiji, saying that he had gone back on his assurance to the Sikhs and declared that the Sikhs would carry on an agitation until such time as the scheme was dropped. It is against this background that the Non-Party Political Conference presided over by Tej Bahadur Sapru wanted to appoint a sub-committee which would examine the whole communal and minority question in India.

Aware of the reactions to the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Wavell tried to take the initiative to end the political deadlock by convening a conference of all the political leaders at Simla. Before doing so, he wanted to go to England to consult Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his cabinet colleagues. But seeing that Sapru was exerting himself from the platform of the Non-Party Conference, he delayed his going to England.

In December 1944, the All India Hindu Mahasabha met at Bilaspur under the presidentship of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee. Without mincing words he said emphatically that Pakistan could never be won by the Muslim League on its own strength: 'He [Jinnah] counts on the British support to divide India. If the British sword is to be perpetuated for defending Pakistan it becomes a colossal hoax and a badge of unbroken slavery.'³⁷

The Bhulabhai Desai-Liaquat Formula

In the meanwhile, Bhulabhai Desai, a member of the Congress Working Committee and a leader of the Congress Party in the Central Legislature came to an understanding with Liaquat Ali Khan, the Muslim League leader. According to this formula, a coalition government was to be

formed at the centre, and in order to achieve it, Bhulabhai Desai and Jinnah were to be invited to form an interim government. Once they were invited to do so, they would then consult the various groups in the Indian legislature and recommend names to the governor general for inclusion in the executive council. The members selected for inclusion in the executive council need not necessarily be members of the legislature. A ratio would be maintained between the various communities in the composition of the council. Bhulabhai went to the extent of saying that he was willing to agree to equal representation between the Congress and the Muslim League while the rest of the communities could have 20 per cent reservation. It was also proposed that the interim government would work within the then existing constitution of India and that all members of the council would be Indians, except the governor general and the commander-in-chief. This, according to the Desai-Liaquat formula, would be the interim arrangement and a long-term solution could be found after a year or so.³⁸

In the provinces the existing ministries would be allowed to continue though there might be party adjustments. Wherever Section 93 had been promulgated after 1942, coalition ministries consisting of the Congress and League representatives would take office. The formula did not envisage the holding of general elections either at the centre or in the provinces. Another interesting feature of the understanding was that it did not envisage the release of the political detainees. It envisaged their release only after the formation of an interim central government.

When Bhulabhai Desai publicly announced his pact with Liaquat Ali Khan, the latter denied its existence altogether, though, according to Munshi, Bhulabhai had shown him the draft which was initialled by Liaquat Ali Khan. Probably the reason for Liaquat Ali denying the pact was that he was afraid of having taken the initiative, perhaps without the knowledge of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah, of course, categorically announced that he was neither a party to this nor was he consulted about it.³⁹ Thus the Bhulabhai-Liaquat Ali formula ended in smoke. It is against this background that Wavell was called to England to discuss the future of India. He reached London on 23 March 1945. On 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered.

Meanwhile, pressure began to mount on the British Government, not only from the House of Commons but also from the various political organizations within India to release the Indian leaders.

In the Commons, some of the members insisted that the Government of India should now take the initiative in bringing about consultations and conferences between various representative leaders of India and try to end the political deadlock.

In India, the Hindu Mahasabha President, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, once again declared that 'Pakistan is no solution of the communal problem . . . it can only end in civil war,' and raised a pertinent question: 'Why should it be impossible for all political parties . . . to put aside for the time being their other differences and to concentrate in a spirit of harmonious co-operation for strengthening the will power of the Indian people?'⁴⁰ He expected the initiative for the settlement to come from the Indian people.

Thus, during the year 1944, the Indians took the initiative to solve the communal problem through the Gandhi-Rajaji formula and the Gandhi-Jinnah talks. Apart from this, attempts were also made by Mirza Ismail, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Bhulabhai Desai. These efforts were made because the British insisted that there should be communal unity in India before they could grant independence. But, unfortunately, all efforts at unity proved unsuccessful. Moreover, most of the major Congress leaders were still in prison. The year 1944 thus saw Indo-British relations at an uncommonly low ebb. Under the circumstances, many felt that it was for the British to take the initiative in bringing about a communal settlement and also in transferring power to Indian hands. The Second World War, in the meanwhile, was drawing to a close and it was felt that Britain would now announce plans for granting independence to India.

6. Indian Political Opinion at the Beginning of 1945

The National Liberal Federation, while celebrating its Silver Jubilee Session in Lahore on 17-18 March 1945, declared through its president, T.R.V. Sastry, that Britain must grant dominion status to India at the end of the war and that the Indian national leaders and other political prisoners and Congress detenues must be immediately released⁴¹ so that it would be possible to form a national government in India within one year of the end of the Second World War. The National Liberal Federation demanded the formation of a composite government and the release of the imprisoned members of the Congress Working Committee to solve the Indian political stalemate. Mahatma Gandhi, when interviewed on 20 March 1945, declared that it was useless to talk of resolving the present deadlock unless the Congress members in detention were released. On 22 March, Mr Shinwell asked in the House of Commons whether Mr Amery, the Secretary of State for India, would take advantage of the visit of Lord Wavell to discuss the possibility of releasing the Indian political prisoners so that the India Government could find an early solution for the political deadlock, to which Amery replied that he would certainly consider the problem. Already the

Congress Party under the leadership of Dr Khan Saheb had assumed office in the North West Frontier Province. When asked if this would be the pattern in the rest of India, Francis Mudie, the Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, replied in the Central Legislative Assembly that they were hoping for a clear indication from the Congress party that it had abandoned the method of attempting to coerce those who did not agree with them and paralyse the administration of the country. He hoped that the Congress would co-operate with the other parties and the government on an all-India basis.

While this was the attitude of the Indian Government at the beginning of 1945, the All India Christian Conference met at Hyderabad (Deccan) on 26 and 27 March 1945 under the presidentship of S. Balasingam Satya Nadar, and declared that the Christian community did not desire to witness the spectacle of a divided India. Nadar declared that, as loyal citizens of the country, they would agitate for immediate grant of swaraj and that all Indian political prisoners should be released unconditionally. On 4 April 1945, 99 well known British women met and appealed to Churchill, the Prime Minister, and Amery, the Secretary of State for India, and Lord Wavell to solve the political deadlock in India by releasing the Indian leaders in view of developments in the Far East and the forthcoming conference at San Francisco.

The British Government had nominated three Indians, namely, Ramaswamy Mudaliar, Feroz Khan Noon and V.T. Krishnamachari, to represent India in the London and San Francisco conferences on World Security Organization. The nomination of these three Indians was strongly condemned by the Indian public and Nawab Siddique Ali Khan moved an adjournment motion in the Central Legislative Assembly saying that these people did not represent the people of India as the Indians had no say in the selection of this delegation. But the governor general did not allow this adjournment motion to be moved in the Central Legislative Assembly. In the meanwhile the Conciliation Committee which was appointed by Saprú in December 1944 came forward on 8 April 1945 with certain suggestions, including the formation of a constitution-making body consisting of 160 members as prescribed in the draft declaration of Stafford Cripps. It also wanted that the princely states should be allowed to join as a unit of the Union of India. Thirdly, it was recommended that no province of British India would have the right to stay away from the Union and no Indian State which had acceded to the Indian Union would have the right to secede. The Conciliation Committee also envisaged a bi-cameral legislature at the centre, an independent judiciary, common defence and the formation of a Union Public Service Commission. It further envisaged the inclusion of Fundamental Rights and provisions for an independent

Minority Commission in the future constitution of India. These proposals were based on the assumption that there would be a parity between Hindus, other than Scheduled Castes, on the one hand, and the Muslims on the other, in the future constitution-making body, the union central legislature and in the executive. It also accepted the principle of joint electorates, the overriding consideration being the unity of India. It was totally opposed to the partition of India. The Conciliation Committee also appealed to the British Government to form an interim government and also to establish machinery for drafting a new constitution. But this scheme was rejected both by Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim League and also by the All India Hindu Mahasabha. Jinnah rejected the scheme because it did not meet his demand for Pakistan. The Hindu Mahasabha rejected it because it envisaged the principle of parity of representation between the Hindus and Muslims in the union executive, legislature and the constitution making body. Sapru, however, presented his recommendations to Wavell. Commenting on the Sapru Report, Allama Mashriqui, the Khaksar leader said: '...the question of Pakistan has been very badly handled... Pakistan is now too far advanced to be ignored or by-passed and whatever its merits or demerits, it has got to be dealt with in accordance with current sentiments.' On the same day, i.e., on 12 April, Sorensen, the Labour M.P., asked Amery whether the British Government was considering sympathetically the proposals made by the representative Indians (Conciliation Committee to Lord Wavell). Amery replied in the positive saying that they viewed the proposals favourably.

One month after the assumption of office by the Congress in the North West Frontier Province, the first All India Political Conference was held at Peshawar from 21 to 23 April 1945 with Sir Syed Mahmood as president. It pressed for the immediate release of the national workers in prison and for the formation of a national government at the centre which would be responsible to the legislature. A resolution to this effect was moved by Bhulabhai Desai. The conference also declared that men like Feroz Khan Noon and Ramaswami Mudaliar had no right to represent India at San Francisco and London because they were tools of the British Government and not the true representatives of the Indian people.

The Frontier Akali Conference, which met from 5 to 6 May at Peshawar under the presidentship of Sardar Mangal Singh also reiterated the necessity of forming an all party interim government at Delhi as an immediate political requirement. It demanded also the release of political prisoners and an assurance from Britain that the demand for Pakistan would not be conceded in the future Indian constitution.

Even Dr B.R. Ambedkar, while presiding over the Scheduled Castes' Federation meeting at Bombay on 6 and 7 May, declared that he was for a united India in preference to Pakistan. He claimed that his plan for the future government of India had been devised before the plan for Pakistan. According to Ambedkar's plan, a majority community should be conceded a majority, but not an absolute majority, since majority in the Indian context meant a communal majority and not a political majority. Ambedkar did not want the executive council to be a committee of the majority party in the legislature, but wanted it to be both non-parliamentary as well as parliamentary (i.e. removable before the expiry of the term of the legislature, also its members were to be chosen from the legislature having the right to speak, vote and ask questions). He did not envisage the appointment of a constituent assembly to draft a constitution, but to adopt the Constitution of India under the Government of India Act, 1935, and delete those sections of it which were inconsistent with the concept of dominion status. If this was done, according to Ambedkar, the Muslims would have no grounds to fear a communal majority because the weightage enjoyed by the Muslims would not be disturbed under any circumstances. He said, the position of Muslims in the non-Pakistan provinces would be greatly strengthened by an increase in their representation, which they would not get if Pakistan was formed, and which would leave them in a helpless condition. Ambedkar envisaged that the Hindus who formed 54.6 per cent of the population should get 40 per cent representation whilst the Muslims who constituted 28.5 per cent should get 32 per cent representation, Scheduled Castes who formed 14.3 per cent should get 29 per cent, while Indian Christians who were 1.16 per cent should be given 3 per cent weightage, the Sikhs who constituted 1.49 per cent of the population should get 4 per cent weightage and Anglo-Indians who constituted 0.5 per cent should get 1 per cent weightage in the Central Assembly. According to him, in the Bombay legislature, Hindus who constituted 76.42 per cent of the population would get 40 per cent weightage while the Muslims who constituted 9.98 per cent would get 28 per cent weightage, Scheduled Caste with 9.64 per cent population would get 28 per cent, the Indian Christians who constituted 1.75 per cent would get 2 per cent, Anglo-Indians who formed 0.7 per cent of the Bombay Presidency would get 1 per cent and the Parsis, who were 0.44 per cent would get 1 per cent.

In the Punjab Legislature, Dr Ambedkar envisaged that the Muslims who constituted 57.06 per cent of the population in the Punjab would get 40 per cent weightage in representation, the Hindu 22.17 per cent would get 28 per cent weightage, the Sikhs 13.22 per cent would get 21 per cent, the Scheduled Caste 4.39 per cent would get 9 per cent weightage and Indian Christian 1.71 per cent would get 2 per cent

weightage.⁴² Ambedkar added that, if the principle of unanimity was accepted by the Hindus as the rule of decision in the legislature and in the executive, there would be no communal problem in India. So, the Scheduled Caste Federation meeting on 7 May opposed the Sapru proposals for a constituent assembly.

On 7 May 1945, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the Allies. This was of great significance to India, since the British had promised earlier to grant self-government to India after the termination of the war. Of course, the war with Japan was still going on. On 7 May, the Justice Party Federation in Southern India, presided over by R.K. Shanmukham Chettiar, also expressed its opposition to the Sapru proposals. They wanted a composite government to function at the centre and in the provinces for the next 10 years. They also demanded separate electorates for non-Brahmin Hindus and for the Scheduled Castes.

It was in this situation that Clement Attlee, on 28 May 1945, pledged the Labour Party to introducing self-government in India. He said that the party would assist India to work out her constitution. In the meanwhile, accompanied by his private secretary, Lord E. Jenkins and Rao Bahadur V.P. Menon, who was then the Reforms Commissioner, Lord Wavell returned to India on 4 June 1945. During his visit to London he had discussed with Attlee and his colleagues the economic and administrative problems arising from India's constitutional deadlock and also the war against Japan.

7. The White Paper on India

The outcome of these discussions was the British Government White Paper on India of 14 June 1945, presented to the House of Commons on the same day. In the White Paper the British Government once again affirmed its determination to break the Indian political deadlock and renewed the March offer of 1942. It also envisaged the formation of a Viceroy's Executive Council with Indian political leaders in such proportions as to give a balanced representation to the main communities in India. It also envisaged that an equal proportion of Muslims and Caste Hindus would be taken on the executive council. To facilitate this, it proposed amendment of the Government of India Act of 1935. The White Paper also envisaged the convening by the viceroy of a conference of leading Indian politicians to apprise them of his intention of re-constituting his executive council and to invite a list of names for the purpose. They expected these new members of the executive council to give their wholehearted support to the war against Japan and to see that it came to a successful conclusion. The White Paper further said that the members of the executive council would all be Indians, except the viceroy and the commander-in-chief, who would retain his position as War Member. One of the Indian members of the Viceroy's council

would be in charge of external affairs and the viceroy and executive council would appoint ambassadors and other accredited representatives in foreign countries to represent India. The relation between the Crown and the Indian States would not be affected by these proposals. Amery made it clear that the two principles on which the new interim proposals were based were, firstly, that no limit would be set to India's freedom to decide for herself her own destiny, whether as a free member and partner in the British Commonwealth or even outside it, and secondly, that this could be achieved only under a constitution or constitutions framed by Indians to which the main elements in India's national life were consenting parties.⁴³

When Amery presented the White Paper, Mr Sorensen, a Labour Member of Parliament said that it represented no real advance on the Cripps Offer of 1942, except that, in a representative and symbolic way, the viceroy's executive council was to include in all its offices, Indians.

Wavell, on his return to India, in a broadcast on 14 June, declared that the proposals were designed 'to ease the present political situation and advance India towards her goal of full self-government.'⁴⁴ He further announced that he intended to invite both Central and provincial leaders to discuss the formation of a new executive council reflecting popular political opinion. He also said that he would give equal representation to Caste Hindus and Muslims and that it would be an entirely Indian council, except for the viceroy and the commander-in-chief as the war member. Indian members of the executive council would be in charge of external affairs, finance and home department and the executive council would direct its armies to prosecute the war against Japan till its final conclusion and to carry on the government till the formation of a new and permanent mutually agreed constitution for India. He further declared that he proposed to form the executive council by inviting to a conference members of legislatures who had been premiers or prime ministers in the provincial governments and also the leader of the Congress Party and the deputy leader of the Muslim League in the Central Assembly and those representing the European Group in the Assembly apart from Gandhiji and Jinnah, representing the two main political parties. Besides, the viceroy said that Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj would be invited to represent the Scheduled Castes while Master Tara Singh would be invited to represent the Sikhs. He further said that the proposed conference would be held in Simla on 25 June 1945. He declared that, in case the conference failed to achieve any concrete results, the present system of government would continue and that it would not affect the Indian States. The viceroy also announced that, with the approval of the Home Government, he had ordered the immediate release of all the members of the Congress Party who were still in detention.

Thus for the first time the British proposed to entrust to Indians the departments of external affairs, finance and home. The commander-in-chief, of course, retained his position in the executive council as a member in charge of war. The governor-general retained his veto power but it would not be exercised unreasonably.

In accordance with the announced policy, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya Narendra Deva, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were released from Ahmednagar Fort Jail. The King Emperor, George VI, in his speech to the British Parliament on the same day hoped that the invitation of the British Government for reconstituting the viceroy's executive council and for redeploying the war effort against Japan would meet with the full co-operation from the Indian leaders.

Mahatma Gandhi said that it was the Congress Working Committee that would decide the ultimate attitude of the Congress towards the new proposals. Master Tara Singh, the Akali Sikh leader, and Rowan Hodge, the president of the European Association in India supported the proposals while the Hindu Mahasabha headed by Shyama Prasad Mookerjee condemned the proposals as 'a communal award; more monstrous than the first'. Savarkar, the Hindu Mahasabha leader also declared that the Congress would cease to be an Indian National Congress if it were to accept the British proposals because, by accepting them, the Congress would be indirectly acknowledging that it represented only the Hindu section of the Indian population. Amery, the Secretary of State for India, in a statement on 21 June 1945, declared that the proposals represented the consensus of opinion of all parties in Great Britain. Even M.A. Jinnah, the Muslim League president, assured the viceroy that the Muslim League would make its contribution to any just and reasonable interim settlement. Sir Stafford Cripps, the Labour Party leader supported the proposals.

The Congress Working Committee members who were released from prison met in Bombay on 21 June 1945, under the presidentship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, to discuss the new British proposals, and conveyed to the Government of India that the President of the Indian National Congress and other Congress leaders should be invited by the Viceroy to the Simla Conference and that the Congress Party would authorize its members so invited to attend the Simla Conference.

Pandit Nehru, describing the Wavell Plan as an interlude, said 'that if a brief temporary arrangement helps me in any way to attain my goal, I accept it.' But the Working Committee of the All India Hindu Mahasabha condemned the proposals saying that, by introducing parity between the Caste Hindus and Muslims it actually reduced India's 75 per cent Hindu majority to the position of a minority and, by introduc-

ing disparity between the Muslims and Scheduled Castes, it was able to divide Hindus into two separate entities, namely the Caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes. Acharya Kripalani, who was then the General Secretary of the Congress, declared in a press conference in Lucknow that the British should have invited other parties, apart from the Congress and the Muslim League, to the conference if the Government was really serious about forming a coalition government at the centre. He said that the Congress was a national party which represented all interests and not only the Caste Hindus.

8. The Simla Conference

It was against this background that the Simla Conference met at the Viceregal Lodge in Simla from 25 June to 14 July 1945. All the invitees, excepting Gandhiji, were present at this conference. The viceroy in his opening speech declared that the Wavell Plan did not purport to reach a final constitutional settlement nor was it a final solution to India's complex problems; and that the plan did not in any way propose to prejudice or prejudice the final issue. He further declared that, until there was a change in the constitution, he was responsible for maintaining tranquillity in India and that the people of India should accept him as a sincere friend of India. The Congress Party, at the very outset, through Maulana Azad, made it clear that the Congress Working Committee's participation in the conference in order to resolve the Indian political deadlock did not imply that the All India Congress Committee would automatically ratify their decisions and that the ultimate decision rested with that committee, the majority of whose leaders were still in jail. While accepting that the Wavell Plan was provisional and was intended as a preliminary step towards Indian independence, sought clarification on the following points:

1. the scope and functioning of the proposed external affairs department;
2. the ultimate authority over the Indian Army;
3. the intentions of the British Government regarding its colonies in South-East Asia.

He also wanted the government to clarify what would be the relations between the Indian princely states and the national government that the viceroy proposed to set up. The Congress president also made it clear that the principle of parity was unacceptable to the Congress and that the Congress should have the right to suggest the names of the Muslim members who were to be taken on the proposed national government and that any decision of the Congress Working Committee to participate in the Simla Conference had to be ratified by the All India Congress Committee, which was still under ban.

Gandhiji, even at the outset of the Simla Conference, in his letters to the viceroy on 14 and 19 June, took objection to the words 'Caste Hindu' used by the viceroy. He also wanted that Maulana Azad should be invited to the Simla Conference as an official representative of the Congress Party whereas he would attend the conference in his personal capacity only. The viceroy hastened to clarify telegraphically on 16 June that 'Caste Hindu' was not used in an offensive sense but only to say that there should be equality between Muslims and Hindus other than members of the Scheduled Castes. On 17 June, he invited Azad as a duly authorized Congress representative to represent the Congress Party. Gandhiji pointed out to the viceroy that if the parity between the Caste Hindus and Muslims remained unaltered, the main purpose of the Simla Conference would be defeated, and that he would advise the Congress not to participate in the formation of the proposed executive council if the parity remained unaltered.⁴⁵ The viceroy, however, appealed to Gandhiji for his goodwill and cooperation for the success of the conference.

On 26 June 1945, the leaders who met at the Simla Conference discussed in detail the scope, functions and responsibilities of the viceroy's executive council. The conference was adjourned from 27 June to 29 June to enable the leaders to discuss informally among themselves in order to come to a broad understanding. But it became obvious by 28 June that there was no point of accord between the Congress and the Muslim League; and the Conference, therefore, was adjourned from 29 June with the intention of reassembling on 14 July in order to enable the various delegations to carry on mutual discussions and to submit a list of names for the proposed council.

M.A. Jinnah was also requested by the secretary to the governor general to submit a list of suitable candidates from the Muslim League, not less than eight and not more than twelve to be considered for inclusion. He was also given the option to choose names of any other persons of any community who were not members of the Muslim League. The Muslim League feared that the number of Muslims would be reduced to a minority under the Wavell Plan and that they might not get a fair deal. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, general secretary of the Muslim League, on 2 July 1945, questioned the right of the Indian National Congress to a share in the Muslim quota of seats in the council and said that the stand of the Congress was unreasonable and untenable. On 7 July 1945, the Congress president, Maulana Azad, sent a panel of 15 names to the Viceroy for his consideration. In the panel of 15 names he included the names of five Caste Hindus, five Muslims, two Scheduled Caste Hindus, one Indian Christian, one Parsi and one Sikh. Jinnah, however, insisted that it was the Muslim League alone that

should have the right to suggest the names of Muslim members for inclusion in the viceroy's executive council.

Jinnah at this juncture requested the viceroy for an interview. Conceding Jinnah's request, Lord Wavell held discussions with him on 8 July which lasted ninety minutes, apparently in order to persuade Jinnah not to insist on the Muslim League's right to recommend names of all the Muslim members but Jinnah declined to accept the viceroy's viewpoint and he wrote a letter to him on 9 July expressing his regret and inability to send a list of names on behalf of the Muslim League. On 10 July, the All India Hindu Mahasabha general secretary, Manoranjan Choudhary, in a press statement, declared that it was obvious that Jinnah, by refusing to send a panel of Muslim League nominees had created a deadlock. The Nawab of Bhopal, the chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, stated on 11 July, that he appreciated the viceroy's sincerity and goodwill in trying to solve the Indian problem.

Lord Wavell also, in reply to Gandhiji's earlier objection, tried to convince the latter about the genuineness of his (viceroy's) interest and that he did not use the term Caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes to imply that Caste Hindus were separate from the Scheduled Castes. However, Gandhiji was not convinced. So, when the members of the Simla Conference reassembled on 14 July at 11 a.m., the viceroy communicated to them as well as to the public that the Simla Conference had failed to achieve a tangible solution to the Indian problem.

It is obvious that the conference failed mainly because Jinnah insisted on nominating all the Muslim members of the executive council from the Muslim League. The Congress also had to convey to the viceroy that the stand taken by Jinnah was impossible to entertain and that to allow the Muslim League to nominate all the Muslim members to the council was inconsistent with the basic national character of the Indian National Congress and the stand it had taken hitherto. Azad made this clear:

Two points arise out of the present. The first is that the attitude of the Muslim League has been responsible for the failure of the conference. The second point which emerges from the refusal of the Muslim League is that it is for Lord Wavell to decide whether to go forward or not. His Excellency has decided not to proceed for the present.⁴⁶

Jinnah, while addressing a press conference on the same day, i.e., on 14 July, at Simla observed:

On a final examination and analysis of the Wavell Plan, we found that it was a snare. There was the combination consisting of the Gandhi Hindu Congress who stand for India's Hindu National independence as one India,

and the latest exponents of geographical unity, Lord Wavell, and Glancy and Khizr [Leader of the Punjab Unionist Party], who are bent upon creating disruption among the Musalmans in the Punjab.⁴⁷

He declared that the viceroy failed to satisfy the demands of the Muslim League, namely, to concede the idea of Pakistan, and secondly to have an equal number of Muslim members from the Muslim League in the executive council as against the Congress nominees.

On the next day, i.e., on 15 July, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, the Prime Minister of Punjab and the leader of the Unionist Party of Punjab, in a press conference at Simla, explained that the failure of the Simla conference was mainly due to the differences that existed between the Congress and the Muslim League and not because the conference failed to allot a seat to a Punjabi Muslim.

Master Tara Singh, the Akali Sikh leader, addressing a press conference on the same day, said that the failure of the conference was mainly due to a single point, i.e., while the Muslim League insisted that it was the sole representative of all the Muslims in India and as such it had the right to nominate all the Muslims to the viceroy's executive council, the Congress refused to accept the stand of the Muslim League and insisted on its right to nominate at least one Muslim member on behalf of the Indian National Congress to the Executive Council. Tara Singh pertinently observed: 'So the dispute was for one seat only, which resulted in this gigantic failure.'⁴⁸ Dr Khan Sahib, the Prime Minister of the North West Frontier Province, placed the blame squarely on Jinnah for the failure of the conference and declared: 'I do not believe in such conferences as the conferences cannot get you independence.' Even Dr Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, the president of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, held Jinnah responsible for the failure of the conference. Thus it is clear that the Viceroy, the Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Akali Sikh Party, all were of the opinion that it was Jinnah alone and his obstinacy that was responsible for the failure of the Simla Conference.

British Opinion on Breakdown of the Simla Conference

The British newspapers commented widely on the Simla meeting.

The Daily Telegraph, while it said that the talks broke down due to ancient hostilities between Hindus and Muslims, indirectly blamed Jinnah for his obstinacy in insisting that he alone had the exclusive right to nominate all the Muslims. *The News Chronicle* of 16 July 1945 squarely put the blame on Jinnah saying, 'the responsibility for the failure of the Simla Conference was not Lord Wavell's; it was Mr Jinnah's and Mr Jinnah's alone. the Muslim League is no more completely representative

of the Muslims in India than the Congress is completely representative of Hindu India.' *The Daily Mail*, and the *Observer* also put the blame on Jinnah for the failure of the Simla Conference while *The Times* was less candid in its criticism. But, in general, British public opinion agreed with Indian public opinion in holding Jinnah and his intransigent attitude responsible for the failure of the Simla Conference.

While this was how matters stood in India, after the defeat of Germany on 9 May 1944, general elections were held in England in July 1945 and the Labour Party was returned to power. Clement Attlee formed a government on 27 July 1945. Lord Pethick Lawrence became Secretary of State for India in place of Amery. This was an important event for India because the British Labour Party had pledged India its freedom after the war. So, in keeping with their earlier promises, the Labour Party proposed to hold elections in India and to convene a constituent assembly for drafting a constitution for an independent India at the earliest possible date. These plans of the Labour Party came to be known as the Attlee-Wavell Proposals.

The Second World War ended in a victory for the Allies, with Japan surrendering unconditionally on 15 August 1945. After the failure of the Simla conference and the installation of the Labour Ministry in London, Wavell announced on 21 August 1945 that general elections to the central and provincial legislatures would be held as soon as possible after the electoral rolls were ready by May 1946. (The central legislature had been in existence for the last ten years. Wavell declared that its term would expire on 1 October 1945.)

After making this declaration, Wavell went to London on 26 August 1945, and after consulting the new secretary of state and the Labour cabinet, he returned to India on 16 September 1945.

9. The Attlee-Wavell Proposals

On his return to India, the viceroy declared in a broadcast on 19 September 1945 that it was the intention of Great Britain to see that India attained full self-government and that he intended to convene a constitution-making body for that purpose.

He also declared that soon after the provincial elections, he would constitute an executive council with the support of the main Indian parties and hold discussions with the representatives of the various State legislative assemblies on whether they would accept the 1942 proposals or some other alternative proposals. He also said, he would consult the representative of the Indian States to ascertain their views regarding their role in the future constitution-making body. On the same day, i.e., 19 September, Prime Minister Attlee also declared in a broadcast from London that general elections would be conducted in

India and that he would take positive steps to set up a constituent assembly of India, with elected representatives, for framing a new constitution for India. He further declared that the British Government would negotiate a treaty with the constitution-making body of India and said that he had empowered Lord Wavell to undertake preliminary discussions with the representatives of the provincial legislatures in order to constitute an executive council. It should be noted in this connection that the Labour Government did not insist on the Hindus and the Muslims coming to an amicable settlement before Britain could think of giving India self-government in gradual stages, as was reiterated again and again by the previous Conservative government.

After taking stock of the statements of Lord Wavell and Clement Attlee, the All India Congress Committee met at Gowalia Tank in Bombay on 21 September and discussed the new British proposals. Ultimately it passed a resolution saying that the broadcasts of Wavell and Attlee were vague, inadequate and unsatisfactory and that nothing short of independence would be acceptable to the Congress and the country. It also did not agree to the proposals concerning elections to the central and provincial legislatures, but decided, in order to demonstrate the will of the people, particularly over the issue of immediate transfer of power, that the Congress should contest the forthcoming elections. The Muslim League, on the other hand, rejected the offer saying that it was not different from the Cripps offer and that the only solution to the Indian constitutional problem lay in the acceptance of Pakistan.⁴⁹

The All India Akali Conference met at Gujranwalla on 29 September 1945, and turned down the Attlee-Wavell proposals saying they were 'halting and unsatisfactory'. However, the Akali conference decided to contest the elections which were a part of the Wavell proposals.

The All India Scheduled Castes Federation which met on 3 October 1945 at Poona was presided over by Rao Bahadur N. Shivraj. Dr Ambedkar was a special invitee. This conference also expressed inability to support the Attlee-Wavell plan. The federation was unhappy because it felt that the character of the central legislature was not representative. It did not like the communal nature of the proposed constituent assembly and the linking of the provincial elections with the formation of a constituent assembly. Even the Council of the Servants of India Society which met in Poona did not approve of the proposals, saying that they did not envisage any fresh approach towards the solving of the Indian problem. Most political parties, however, while not supporting the proposals in toto, were nevertheless prepared to contest the general elections.

It was during this period that the officers of the Indian National Army were put on trial in the Red Fort in New Delhi. The trial began on

5 November. Captain Shah Nawaz Khan, Captain P.K. Sehgal and Lt. Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon were court martialed because, while they were prisoners of war, they had left the Indian Army and joined the Indian National Army founded by Subhas Chandra Bose. According to the British, they had waged war against the King Emperor. But, in the eyes of the Indians and the Congress party, they were patriotic sons of India. The whole country was excited by this trial. The slogan, JAI HIND, of the Indian National Army became a common term of greeting between Indians from this time onwards. The court found the accused guilty and, according to the law, they were sentenced to transportation for life, but such was the intensity of emotion and anger created in people's mind that the British bowed before the public opinion and the Commander-in-Chief pardoned the INA personnel.

On 4 December 1945, Herbert Morrison, Lord President of the Council and Leader of House of Commons, announced in the Commons that the Labour government wanted to promote the early realization of full self-government for India, and, as a prelude to this, elections to the provincial and central legislatures would be held. He said that full self-government could be realized only by an orderly and peaceful transfer of control of the machinery of the state to purely Indian authority. Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, also made a similar statement in the House of Lords.

The elections were held for the central legislature in November and December 1945. The Congress returned 56 members out of 102, while the Muslim League returned 30. The remaining members consisted of 8 belonging to the European group, 6 independents and 2 Akali Sikhs. The remaining 40 were nominated members comprising 26 officials and 14 non-officials. The Congress elected Asaf Ali as the Leader of the Congress Party in the assembly while Jinnah represented the Muslim League and P.J. Griffith the European Group. On 16 December 1945, Lord Wavell once again, while speaking before the Associated Chambers of Commerce, reiterated the desire of the British Government to give complete political freedom and a government of their own choice to the Indians. Thus, by the close of 1945, things appeared to be rosier for the cause of Indian independence.

As a step towards its realization, the British Labour Party now announced the visit of a Delegation which became famous as The Cabinet Mission.

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Chapter VIII

The Cabinet Mission

R.K. Perti

AFTER WORLD WAR II, when efforts were being made to dress the wounds and remove the scars everywhere, and to give a new shape to the world, the political problem in India cried out for a practical solution. The Cripps offer was both dead and out of date, though the Secretary of State for India appeared to be in favour of going back to it.¹ Indian aspirations called for a fresh and new plan of action.

The Indian National Congress, being 'the biggest and the strongest and the most representative in the country' was determined to lead the struggle for freedom to a successful conclusion. The Hindu-Muslim differences were believed to be the creation of the British and it was expected that they would disappear once the British had cleared out of India and left the Indians to settle matters themselves. The Congress emphasized that the future of India depended on the strength and unity of the people. It had the capacity to boldly meet the challenge posed by the financial and economic difficulties facing the country and to ensure the unhindered economic development of the country. The princes also were expected to lend a helping hand in tackling the great tasks that lay ahead. Mahatma Gandhi, appealing to the higher senses observed: 'Hatred is in the air and impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and everywhere.'²

Sounding a discordant note in this rising crescendo of Indian nationalism, the Muslim League felt that Islam and the Muslims would be in danger in free and united India. It also asserted that it was the only authoritative and representative organization of the Muslims of India and that this had been fully demonstrated in the recently held elections to the provincial assemblies. Mohammad Ali Jinnah in a statement on 10 January 1946 warned:

Do not manoeuvre and resort to machinations in order to get the Muslims to accept anything but the establishment of Pakistan, which is the only

solution of India's constitutional problem and will lead to peace, security and prosperity of Pakistan and Hindustan. . . . Ours is grim determination. Nobody should be under any delusion about our stand for the establishment of Pakistan at any cost, whatever the opposition.³

In England the situation was quite different. In spite of his being instrumental in winning the Second World War, Winston Churchill, the sheet anchor of imperialism, appeared to be losing ground. And, in the general elections of summer 1945, the people voted his arch opponent, Clement Attlee, and his Labour Party to power. The new Labour government looked at the Indian problems with great sympathy and paid utmost attention to them. But Lord Wavell, the viceroy in India, believed such an approach was sure to result in chaos and turmoil in India. He even tried to dissuade Attlee from taking any action which might lead to the formation of a constitution-making body in India.⁴ He considered that the reasonableness being displayed by the Indian National Congress was only a ploy to regain its earlier position and popular support, and that an indepth study of the implications of the Pakistan demand, raised and frequently fanned by Jinnah and his colleagues, was desirable. Further, Mahatma Gandhi was to him 'a malignant old man' and he urged that, if the Congress gave an ultimatum, it should be suppressed with 'great thoroughness', which included deployment of a considerable number of troops, detention of a large number of persons without or after trial by special courts.⁵

However, these arguments appear to have created little impression on Attlee. He and his colleagues in the government wished to show to the people of India, in particular, that it was sincere in redeeming its pledges. Besides, it wished to demonstrate, in general, to the Allied powers its readiness to settle the Indian problem. It was, therefore, decided to send to India three cabinet ministers, who might assure Indians of the 'goodwill and cordial friendship' of the British Government towards India, and negotiate with the Indian political leaders the *modus operandi* for expediting the transfer of power. The members of the delegation were: Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India; Sir Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade, and Albert Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty. Wavell was sceptical about the success of this delegation, and noted in his Journal on 12 February 1946: 'I am afraid that Cripps will be the operative element, and I think he is sold to the Congress point of view, and I don't think he is quite straight in his methods. I wonder what these three Magi will achieve.'⁶

Announcing the decision of the government to send a mission to India in the House of Commons on 19 February 1946, the prime minister said: '... it is our intention to speed up machinery in agreement with the

Indians, whereby the Indian people themselves will decide their destiny.' Further, the delegation was to act as the representative of the British Government in India and would carry the authority of the cabinet. Wavell was also informed that the members of the delegation and the viceroy would work together as a team. But that did not preclude some personal contacts, which would be 'more easily made outside viceregal lodge perhaps at private dinner parties'.⁸

While it was apparent to Wavell that His Majesty's Government was very anxious to preserve the unity of India and to devise some basis for agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, he had little idea whether the home government had any plans or had issued any directive for resolving the Pakistan issue. He considered that the latter would not only affect India, but also the whole of the empire, 'since it might lead to a conflict with the Muslims'. Further, he was not clear whether the earlier proposal to form a constitution-making body still formed an integral part of the talks about the 'final settlement'. Nevertheless, he believed that the British Government in India was living on the edge of a volcano and that there was need for a more dynamic approach than a mere prolonged discussion with the delegation. However, if the mission succeeded in meeting the Congress demand for full independence and granted some form of Pakistan to Jinnah, the situation could be saved. He expected that the Congress leaders would be quite pliable as they knew that they were getting old and that it was their last chance of attaining their goal. But, if they failed, the leadership of a mass movement was sure to pass to younger and more violent hands.⁹

Just before the Cabinet Mission was to leave for India, Attlee made a statement in the House of Commons on 15 March 1946 indicating the government's views on the various points at issue. He mentioned:

My colleagues are going to India with the intention of using their utmost endeavours to help her to attain that freedom as speedily and fully as possible. What form of Government is to replace the present regime is for India to decide; but our desire is to help her to set up forthwith the machinery for making that decision. . . . I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth. . . . But if she does so elect, it must be her own free will.¹⁰

Talking about the minorities, he emphatically said, 'We are very mindful of the rights of minorities and minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow a minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority.'¹¹

Maulana Azad, the Congress President, felt that Attlee's speech had created a favourable atmosphere and provided an orientation which

would be generally appreciated in the country. 'The real problem to be tackled now,' he observed, 'does not concern theoretical principles but actual practice and from this firm results will naturally flow.'¹²

Nehru was equally satisfied with the statement. But he was critical of Jinnah's scheme of Pakistan, as it had envisaged compulsion in large areas in Punjab, Bengal, Assam, and the North-West Frontier Province, which were very much against the principles of self-determination advocated by him. On the contrary, he considered that the Congress proposal, besides avoiding any compulsion, provided greatest freedom to the provinces or the federating units. Besides, it maintained unity in defence and allied subjects like foreign affairs, communications, currency, etc.

C. Rajagopalachari felt that, in view of the concessions that the Congress had already made, the Muslim League would adopt a reasonable attitude and that the British Government too would like the delegation to succeed in its mission. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru thought that safety lay in a policy of advance and not in a policy of standstill. The delegation should, therefore, make a determined bid to transfer power to India and straightway settle the main issue of setting up a new central government for the interim period and then consider the question of establishment of a constitution-making body.¹³ Sarojini Naidu, however, thought that the proposed visit of the Cabinet Mission was an attempt, at 'the last psychological moment to ensure the friendship of Britain and India in the future'.¹⁴

Jinnah was, however, critical of Attlee and observed that 'he had done a rope-walking but had fallen into a trap of the false propaganda that had been going on for quite sometime'. 'The issue is', he added, 'to give a simile, says the spider to the fly: "Walk to my parlour" and if the fly refuses, it is said that veto is being exercised and the fly is intransigent'.' He stated that the Muslim League did not wish to exercise a veto and hold up the progress and advance of the majority. But it was strongly opposed to the setting up of a single constitution-making body or a representative political executive of the governor-general, and that there could be no compromise about their demand for Pakistan. The Muslims of India were not a minority but a nation, and self-determination was their birthright. Jinnah further felt confident that if the delegation entered into free and frank talks with him, he would convince them that division of India into Pakistan and Hindustan was the only and just solution of India's constitutional problem and that it would ensure peace, prosperity and happiness of the people. He was as well prepared to concede a separate state to the Sikhs, provided they could show him where it could be created.¹⁵

1. Negotiations for an Agreed Transition

The Cabinet Mission landed at Karachi on 23 March 1946 and, giving vent to the confident mood of the mission, Sir Stafford advised the editor of *The Daily Gazette* of Karachi, 'My friend, do not look back, rather look forward. We are determined to succeed and nothing will stop us.'¹⁶ In another statement, Pethick Lawrence said that they had come with the sole idea of helping Indians achieve their independence and beyond that they had an open mind. Though the precise road towards the final structure of India's independence was not yet clear, yet he hoped that the visit of the delegation would inspire everyone in their renewed effort to find the path of co-operation. Further, if they could demonstrate to the world their ability to transfer responsibility smoothly and efficiently, it would be a fresh source of pride to both India and Britain. And about the *modus operandi* he mentioned that the delegation would first collect 'the views of representatives of the Provincial and Central Legislatures, of the leading All-India Parties and organisations and of Indian States'. He tried as well to placate the Muslim League and said, 'While the Congress Party are representative of the greater numbers, it would not be right to regard the Moslem League as merely a minority political party. They are in fact majority representatives of the great Moslem community.'¹⁷

Once in Delhi, the mission got busy with a round of talks with the governors of provinces and other officials before they started discussions with the political parties. Members of the executive council of the viceroy were unanimous in reporting that the fear of Hindu domination was predominant amongst the Muslims and steps should be taken to remove it. But the Muslims should not be allowed to veto political advance just as 'there must be no dictation by Congress'. They apprehended violent resistance from the Muslim League if the latter's demand for an independent Pakistan was not conceded, though Sir Akbar Hydari, one of the members of the executive council considered that the principle of Pakistan required a very close examination before it could be accepted. Noting the situation in Punjab, Major Wyatt, assistant to Sir Stafford, observed on 28 March 1946 that 'they [Muslim League] are busy contacting and training demobilised soldiers and are even training women to use arms.'¹⁸ But, at the same time, they could not help conveying that they expected little help from Indian troops or police in case there was a communal or anti-British outbreak. In the discussions with the governors of the provinces, opinions varied from advocacy of imposition of a political settlement by His Majesty's Government to persuasion of the Muslim League to accept a Pakistan which would be devoid of all substance.¹⁹

The discussions between the members of the delegation and the

viceroy delayed talks on the issue of granting independence to India and the formation of a constitution-making body. The delegation thought that the suitable form of government for India would be a federation with a powerful central government. There could be two or more federations — one for 'Hindu India', one for 'Muslim India', and one for 'Princely India'. Since all three federations would enter into treaty relations with His Majesty's Government for defence and trade purposes, it was felt that British global interests would be fully protected. It was also concluded that, if the Muslims got Pakistan, they would be favourably inclined towards the British, as they knew that Pakistan would not be able to survive a single day in the face of Hindu intransigence. As for the Indian States, Cripps was in favour of allowing them to regain their independence after His Majesty's Government had withdrawn from India. Pethick Lawrence was, however, completely shocked by such a statement coming from a seasoned statesman.²⁰ Nevertheless, it was generally felt that, though the Indian States might have full freedom in their internal administration, they should enter into agreement/agreements with British India for the purpose of constituting a central authority, which might be 'charged with the formulation of policies and with the administration of subjects of common interests like Defence, External Affairs, Communications, Sea-Customs, Tariffs, etc. This Central authority should preferably be a body representing the new Governments in British India and the Governments of the States'.²¹

Wavell advocated keeping up a strong appearance, although it was known that the British position was weak and they were conducting a retreat.²² Setting to rest all sorts of speculation about the delegation's work in India, Cripps mentioned in his statement of 4 April 1946: 'We really have no scheme, either on paper or in our hands, so its non-disclosure means nothing except that it is not there and I hope that will be quite clear to everyone.' The mission was only trying to negotiate an agreement between different sections of thought in India and hoped that the British Government was a helpful and co-operative party in that process. Elaborating further, he said, 'We want to start on a fresh basis. If we start going back to interpreting everything that has been said from Queen Victoria onwards, we shall be in an awful muddle.'²³

Meanwhile the Congress leaders started discussing the stand that they might take at the parleys which they would have with the Cabinet Mission. Patel was neither in favour of going back to the Cripps offer nor making a continuation of talks held by the Congress in April 1942. He considered that full independence alone could be the basis on which the Congress could now initiate discussion. But he warned that they should not get lost in long discussions as time was a very important factor for them. 'What our exact relations [with the British Government] may be

later', he wrote in a letter to Maulana Azad, 'need not be settled now. But it must be clear that it is on the present basis of independence that we consider future problems.' The constituent assembly should have the final authority to determine its constitution and it should have two lists of central subjects, one minimum and compulsory and the other optional. The former should include subjects like defence, foreign affairs, communication and currency. If, however, there was a suggestion about division of the Punjab and Bengal, so that parts of those provinces could be predominantly Muslim, the Congress should agree to any demarcation which might satisfy the majority of the people concerned. As far as the Indian States were concerned, he held that the Congress could not recognize their independence, though it recognized their autonomy within a federation. Further, the central government should inherit the power and authority of the crown representative and the provisional central government should be, in practice, free to act as a cabinet, without any obstruction from the viceroy or any other outside authority. Patel felt that, while the big princely states could become units of the federation, the smaller ones could be either absorbed in the provinces or formed into large viable units. If, however, some states objected to that arrangement, they could be allowed to remain undisturbed for a short while.²⁴

Maulana Azad in his discussions with the delegation, in which Patel and Nehru assisted, reiterated the Congress stand about maintenance of the unity of India and formation of an interim government at the centre immediately on the basis of parity between the Hindus and Muslims. He also emphasized that the Congress was ready for discussions on the basis of complete independence and a united India.²⁵ The Congress premiers of Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces, and Orissa pressed for the establishment of a strong centre and said that the Muslims had been given far more concessions than they were entitled to.²⁶

Jinnah was apprehensive of the delegation betraying the Muslim cause by bypassing him. He was, therefore, unequivocal in giving a call to the Muslims to organize themselves and be prepared for any eventuality, 'undauntedly and fearlessly', for attaining their goal of Pakistan.²⁷ While talking to the members of the delegation on 4 April 1946, he reiterated his demand for Pakistan and two constitution-making bodies.

Subsequently, while presiding over the Muslim Legislators' Convention, he mentioned that he was prepared to concede certain functions like defence and external affairs to a central co-ordinating agency after a treaty to that effect had been entered into by a completely sovereign Pakistan and Hindustan, but no proposal for the formation of

an interim government was acceptable to him until the principle of Pakistan had been conceded.²⁸ H.S. Suhrawardy of the Muslim League, who was considered by Wavell as 'one of the most inefficient, conceited and crooked politicians of India', also pleaded for the creation of Pakistan.²⁹ In fact, all the members of the Muslim League who met the delegation expressed their hatred for the Hindus.³⁰ Nevertheless, in the course of an interview held on 15 April 1946 Jinnah stated that he did not expect any positive results from the negotiations so long as his claim for Pakistan had not been conceded by the delegation.³¹ The All India Shia Congress was, however, opposed to the creation of Pakistan.³²

Master Tara Singh and Baldev Singh pleaded before the delegation the cause of India's independence and opposed the division of the country on a communal basis. They clarified that, if the principle of Pakistan was conceded, a separate sovereign state of Sikhs should also be created, with a separate constitution-making body for Sikhistan. Their main argument, in this case, was 'If Mr Jinnah's Muslims are not to be submitted to majority rule, why should the Sikhs be so submitted?'³³ Clarifying further, Sardar Baldev Singh said: 'The division of the Punjab was quite simple: the Sikhs should have it except the Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions and some adjustments elsewhere.'³⁴

Dr B.R. Ambedkar, speaking for the Scheduled Caste Federation, sought adequate protection and safeguards for the Scheduled Castes so that they were not left at the mercy of the caste Hindus.³⁵ He contended that 'if India became independent it would be one of the greatest disasters that could happen. Before they left, the British must ensure that the new constitution guaranteed to the Scheduled Castes the elementary human rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that it restored their separate electorates.'³⁶ But leaders of the All-India Depressed Classes League like Jagjivan Ram, Radhanath Das and Prithvi Singh Azad pressed for the establishment of an integrated India and safeguarding of the interests of the minorities.³⁷

The Anglo-Indians desired that their religious, cultural, economic and political rights should be protected along with those of other smaller minorities.³⁸ M.R. Jayakar and Tej Bahadur Sapru, who did not belong to any party, advocated the formation of an interim government and leaving the question of Pakistan to the constitution-making body for decision.³⁹ To K.S. Roy of Benegal, the demand for a separate state of Pakistan was nonsense,⁴⁰ while Sarat Chandra Bose considered that if a strong centre was established without creating Pakistan, 'the Muslims will come to heel alright'.⁴¹

The 10-point programme submitted by the Hindu Mahasabha included immediate declaration of independence of India; formation of an interim government, with complete transfer of all power and

authority of the Government of India to it; recognition of India's integrity and indivisibility; opposition to territorial self-determination; India's constitution to be of a federal type; provision for the grant of the utmost measure of autonomy to the federating units — the provinces and the States, though the residual powers should vest in the centre; democracy should be the governing principle of the Constitution, i.e. the rule of majority; representation in the legislatures on the basis of adult franchise; no division of India into British India and the Indian States; and the setting up of a sovereign Constituent Assembly.⁴² The Communist Party urged acceptance of parity in the government and adequate representation to minorities, re-demarcation of provincial boundaries so as to form linguistically and culturally homogeneous national units, to the extent possible.⁴³

Big states like Hyderabad voiced their desire to maintain their independence and the creation of a separate body to take care of their economic arrangements with the centre in the interim period.⁴⁴ But the majority of them were ready to help India attain complete independence. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Dewan of Travancore State, however, did not consider sacrifice of some lives as too high a price to preserve the indispensable unity of India,⁴⁵ and desired that the states should group themselves into viable units.⁴⁶

The discussions with the various Indian leaders had thus been continuing for a fortnight, with all gifts of 'the frankincense of goodwill, the myth of honeyed words, the gold of promises'. But the leaders of the two political parties could not be induced by goodwill and pussy-footing to come to an agreement on the question of unity or division of India. The situation appeared to be quite intractable and it was felt that 'we should have been much better to be stiffer and more determined from the first'. Summing up the situation, Wavell observed:

... in fact from my point of view they have mostly been waste of time. The Congress and League briefs have been repeated by a variety of persons — cleverly or stupidly; clearly or obscurely; with conviction or without conviction; often at great length, very seldom succinctly. Congress has not abated one tittle of its 'democratic' claims as a majority, Jinnah has not conceded an acre of Pakistan. No Hindu has said a word to suggest that the Muslims have a case, no Muslim has admitted the possibility of fair treatment by a Hindu. The Princes and their diwans have been by far the most businesslike, the most sensible and the most lucid. On the surface the omens are not good, but there has been a great deal of talk going on behind the scenes, and Cripps and his minions (Wyatt and Short) have been working hard, to what effect I have no idea; but Cripps seems satisfied.⁴⁷

The members of the delegation, however, did not lose heart and announced that they would shortly enter into the next and most impor-

tant phase of negotiations, when utmost efforts would be made to arrive at a solution acceptable to all sides.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee discussed a scheme for resolving the existing deadlock, which included creation of two or more federations with sovereign powers, who on their own accord would enter into a confederation on an equal basis, and have a loose super-centre. The super-centre could exercise control over subjects like defence, foreign policy, finance, customs and communications. But it would be purely an executive body and have no legislature. But this scheme was not given serious thought as it was considered that, with the confederation and loose super-centre, the country would be exposed to serious dangers, and it might fall apart in times of crisis.

While the delegation had suspended official discussions, it continued to hold parleys with the leaders of the two major political parties. Jinnah appeared to be in favour of the delegation giving 'an award' and the British remaining in India to enforce it after independence. Azad, however, received no intimation about the suggestions which the delegation had made to Jinnah. He was only informed that the British Government did not propose to transfer paramountcy and that the proposed interim government would function under the existing constitution.⁴⁹ Explaining the Congress stand, Azad stated that, while the Congress had earlier insisted on a strong centre, it had now modified its stand to allay the legitimate fears of the Muslims. Under the new scheme, there would be a single constituent assembly and a federation with two sets of central subjects, compulsory and optional, with the component units enjoying the fullest autonomy and residuary powers. Since the scheme ensured freedom for Muslim majority provinces to develop them according to their plan and to influence the centre on all issues which affected them, it was considered to embody the merits of the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. He emphasized that the differences between the provinces would no doubt persist, but they would be economic in nature and not communal in character. He further added that he had brought the Congress round to agreeing to vesting residuary powers in the federating units and the creation of two sets of central subjects.⁵⁰ Azad was, however, critical of the Pakistan scheme, as it was personally to him 'a sign of cowardice', and aimed at asking the Muslims to give up their patrimony and be content with a fragment of it. Besides it being a symbol of defeatism, it was harmful to India and Muslims in particular. 'I must confess', he stated, 'that the very term Pakistan goes against my grain. It suggests that some portions of it are pure while others are impure. Such a division of territories into pure and impure is un-Islamic.'⁵¹

Once the delegation returned to Delhi after a short recess in Kashmir, Cripps resumed his 'lawyer to lawyer approach' to Jinnah. The plan formulated by him provided for a three-tier constitutional arrangement, beginning at the bottom with the provinces and such larger States or groups of States as would agree to join one or the other of the two groups on the basis of a desire expressed by their popular assemblies. One of these groups could be called as Pakistan, the other Hindustan. They would subsequently constitute a Union of All India embracing both Pakistan and Hindustan. All or some of the Indian States or groups of States could also become members of that Union. It further stipulated division of powers between the three tiers of the government: the Union of All India would control external defence, foreign affairs, communications, minority problems and any other matters expressly committed to it by any of the other provincial governments. The governments of the federations of Pakistan and Hindustan would exercise such powers as the province(s) agreed to surrender to them and the degree of that surrender, whether compulsory or optional, would be decided in the constitutions of the federating states.

The governments of the provincial or state units would, however, exercise all powers of absolute sovereignty,⁵² which they had not surrendered to the All India Union or the respective federations. But the Congress was initially 'most unreceptive' to the three-tier proposal for resolving the Congress-Muslim League tangle. Reacting to it, the Congress found that it had neither provided for the independence of India, nor for the withdrawal of British troops from its soil. Besides, it made it clear that it was wrong to form groups of provinces under the Federal Union on a communal basis as that was likely to weaken the union by the creation of sub-federations. Further, the Indian States should form an integral part of the Union, though the manner of their coming into it could be considered at a later date.⁵³

In a meeting with Stafford Cripps, Jinnah reiterated the right of the Muslims to a separate sovereign state and the principle of partition. However, after much discussion, he gave his 'most provisional acceptance' to the proposal and willingness to join the interim government at the centre and accept a boundary commission. He also expressed his willingness to retain the Hindu or the Sikh minority within Pakistan. Further, consistent with the safety and well-being of Pakistan, he was agreeable to the transfer of areas like the Ambala Division in the Punjab, some parts of Assam and West Bengal to Hindustan. He was, however, against joining a single constitution-making body for both Hindustan and Pakistan. He maintained that Pakistani Bengal without the Hoogly and the Howrah Districts would be economically unsound and that he could not give up his claim to the jute or the industrial areas around Calcutta. He also expressed himself strongly against the formation of a

federation for administering certain common subjects. He considered that, once the two States of Pakistan and Hindustan had been created, matters like defence between Hindustan and Pakistan and *vice versa*, and regulation of other matters like trade and communications could be settled through a treaty.⁵⁴

Thus, once acceptance by the Muslim League of the three-tier proposal had been obtained, the Congress was apprised of the proposal and invited for a 'free and frank exchange of views around the table' in the presence of the British ministers at Simla for finding a possible basis for settlement between the two political parties. The outline of the formula which the cabinet delegation had drawn up for the tripartite negotiations at Simla sought to strike a balance between the Congress demand for one common centre and the Muslim League's desire for a separate sovereign state and the ideal of a United India against that of a separate sovereign state for the Muslims. The Congress and the Muslim League delegations were asked by the Cabinet delegation to reach Simla not later than the evening of 1 May.

In view of the stand taken by both the political parties on the basic issues, their unequivocal readiness for an exchange of views at Simla could not be expected. In a letter dated 27 April, Maulana Azad wrote:

The Congress has never accepted the division of India into predominantly Hindu and predominantly Muslim Provinces. It however recognises that there may be Provinces which are willing to delegate to the Central Government subjects in the optional list, while others may agree to delegate only compulsory subjects like Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications.⁵⁵

The Muslim League also reiterated its earlier stand and stated that 'any attempt to impose a constitution on a United India basis or to force any interim arrangement at the Centre contrary to the Muslim League demand will leave the Muslims no alternative but to resist such imposition by all possible means for their survival and national existence'.⁵⁶

While the Congress and the Muslim League agreed to attend the conference, they made it clear that they reserved to themselves the right to raise any point and would not be bound to accept the broad outlines of the tentative plan suggested by the Cabinet delegation.⁵⁷ Wavell was, however, optimistic about persuading both the Congress and the Muslim League to accept a constitutional system consisting of two groups of provinces with a Union Centre having authority only in the sphere of foreign affairs, defence, communications, and possibly minority protection.⁵⁸ The Muslim League Delegation included Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Mohammad Ismail Khan, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar, while the Congress delegation comprised Maulana Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan

Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Mahatma Gandhi was also present at Simla during the negotiations.⁵⁹

The Conference, which opened at Simla on 5 May, had aimed at finding 'a position which Jinnah can regard as conceding Pakistan and Congress can regard as not conceding it';⁶⁰ and had the following agenda for discussion:

1. *Group of Provinces*
 - (a) Composition
 - (b) method of deciding group subjects
 - (c) character of the group organisations;
2. *Union*
 - (a) Union subjects
 - (b) character of the Union Constitution
 - (c) Finance
3. *Constitution-making machinery*
 - (a) - Composition;
 - (b) functions
 - (i) In respect of the Union
 - (ii) In respect of Groups
 - (iii) In respect of Provinces

The meeting opened with a suggestion from the cabinet delegation that there should be some form of Central Union for India which might deal with certain compulsory subjects, though some system of grouping of provinces could be helpful in solving the communal problem. They had also scrutinized the alternative put forward by the Congress of one federal centre with compulsory and optional subjects, but it seemed to them impracticable.⁶¹ Jawaharlal Nehru thought that the centre as suggested by the delegation had no effective powers and was consequently devoid of any substance. He emphasized that there must be a legislative forum at the Centre and the necessary financial 'apparatus'. The centre should also be strong and efficient 'though it might be limited'.⁶²

Maulana Azad in his letter to Pethick Lawrence dated 6 May 1946 further clarified the stand of the Congress. He stated that the declaration of India's independence ought to be synchronized with the withdrawal of British army from the Indian soil, and the formation of a constituent assembly should be preceded by an interim government. Further, the Congress was absolutely opposed to any executive or legislative machinery for a group of provinces or unit of the federation and the Congress did 'not accept the proposal for parity as between groups in regard to the executive or legislative'.⁶³

During the third meeting held on 6 May 1946, Jawaharlal Nehru made clear that the Congress did not wish to encourage any tendencies which might split up India. 'The Union of India, even if the list of subjects was

short, must be strong and organic. Provinces would not be prevented from co-operating among themselves over such subjects as education and health; but they would not need a Group Executive.'⁶⁴ Jinnah, however, stated that if the Congress and the Muslim League agreed that the Muslim provinces could group together and have their own legislature and executive, there could be no difficulty in resolving the questions at issue. Jinnah added that, if the Congress would accept the Groups, the Muslim League would accept the Union, subject to agreement about its machinery.⁶⁵

However, at the insistence of the Congress, it was settled that the question of the composition of the Union should receive priority over that of the Groups. But the discussion ran into rough waters when the financial powers of the Union came up before the conference. Congress wanted that the Union should have powers of direct taxation and be self-supporting, while Jinnah suggested a very unpractical method of providing only a lumpsum, which could be increased, if the centre required more funds. There was also great divergence of views between the Congress and Jinnah on the issue of the central legislature. It was with great difficulty that Jinnah agreed to having a single central legislature. However, there was no difficulty in Jinnah's agreeing to have parity of representatives from the two British India Groups in it. He insisted again that he would accept a 'Union Centre', if the Congress accepted the Group Organization. He also claimed the right of a Group to secede from the Union after five years. While Nehru was very near accepting Jinnah's proposal about Groups, Patel showed his 'cold angry disapproval'. He even got suspicious of Jinnah's plans when the latter asked for the right of a Group to secede.⁶⁶

In a broadcast on 6 May, the Secretary of State for India strongly disapproved the idea of Pakistan as that would involve splitting of the army, and would adversely affect the defence of the country. He also mentioned that he attached 'the greatest importance to the setting up of an interim Government and that for it the government and people of Britain were not only willing but anxious to play their full part in achieving it'. But the Constitution of India was to be framed and worked by Indians when they had brought it into being. And, 'in this venture, he wished them godspeed'.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Congress appeared somewhat mystified and disturbed at the vagueness of the talks and some of the assumptions underlying them. It reiterated its demand for the immediate declaration of independence of India and its demand for the withdrawal of British troops. The interim government should function, as far as possible, as the government of free India and should undertake to make all arrangements for the transitional period. The Congress was totally opposed to

the creation of any legislative or executive machinery for groups of provinces or units of the federation, as such an arrangement would be 'cumbersome, static and disjointed' and was likely to lead to continuous friction. The Congress was also against parity between groups in the executive or legislature, though all efforts should be made to remove fear and suspicion from the minds of every group and community. 'We are emphatically of the opinion', it was stated 'that it is not open to the Conference to entertain any suggestions for a division of India. If this is to come, it should come through the Constituent Assembly, free from any influence of the present governing power.'⁶⁸

The discussions thus appeared to be running into hot waters and to expedite the whole process the delegation took upon itself the task of preparing a list of suggested points for agreement between the representatives of the Congress and the Muslim League. During the discussions it appeared that the viceroy was suspicious of the close relations between Cripps and the Congress though he was himself very sympathetic towards the Muslims. He observed, 'I am not convinced that our document is quite fair to them,' and in his Journal, he noted, 'I am not at all persuaded that C [Cripps] had led G [Gandhi] up to the altar, I believe it is most likely that G has led C down the garden path.' Nevertheless, it was possible to present to the Congress and the Muslim League a scheme which could be helpful in resolving various points at issue. It suggested an all-India union government and legislature dealing with foreign affairs, defence, communications and fundamental rights. It would also have the necessary powers to obtain for itself the finances that it required for these subjects, while the residuary powers would vest in the provinces. Further, groups of provinces might be formed and they might determine the provincial subjects which they would like to be taken as common. They could also set up their own group executives and legislatures. The legislature of the union would, however, be composed of equal proportions from the Muslim majority provinces and from the Hindu majority provinces, irrespective of the fact that those or any of them had formed themselves into groups together with representatives of the States. The government of the union would be constituted in the same proportion as the legislatures. Those provisions would be valid for an initial period of ten years, when, or at ten-yearly intervals thereafter they could be reconsidered, if a majority of the members of any provincial legislative assembly were in favour of such a move. As far as the constitution-making machinery was concerned, it would consist of representatives elected from each provincial assembly in proportion to the strength of the various parties in that assembly or on the basis of one-tenth of the total number, while the States would be invited to send their representatives on the basis of their population, in proportion to the representation from British India. The

constituent assembly would meet at the earliest possible date in New Delhi. The assembly would, however, divide itself into three sections after a preliminary meeting. These sections would represent the Hindu majority provinces, the Muslim majority provinces and the States. Subsequently, the first two sections would meet separately for deciding on the provincial constitutions for their respective groups. If they so desired, a group constitution could also be framed by them. Once the constitution-making process had been completed, any province could opt out of its group and join the other group, or remain independent of any group. The constitution for the union could also be framed on similar lines. However, the interests of various communities were safeguarded by not permitting any communal issue being taken as passed by the assembly without securing the concurrence of the two major communities.⁶⁹

Jinnah protested against these points and stated that he could not agree to a single constitution-making body or the method of its suggested formation. Further, as the Congress had 'finally and definitely turned down the proposed Union', formation of the two constitution-making bodies was perhaps the only alternative. He was also critical of the proposal which added 'Fundamental Rights' to the union list and for not clarifying whether the union government and legislature would have power to raise finances for itself by means of taxation. Further, the method of grouping of provinces was to him at variance with the original formula and was in consonance with the wishes of the Congress.⁷⁰

Since these views were contrary to what had been discussed, Pethick Lawrence thought it proper to straighten the record and wrote to Jinnah: 'It is true that the Congress representatives expressed their view that the limitation was too narrow and agreed further that even so limited, it necessarily included certain ancillary matters. Upto a point you recognised that there was some force in the argument because you agreed, as I understood, that some power to obtain the necessary finances must be given.' Further, in respect of formation of groups, the delegation had only provided an amplified form to their earlier formula and was aimed at providing a reasonable compromise between the views of the two main political parties. Questioning Jinnah's stand on constitution-making machinery, he stated,

You yourself in explaining how your two Constitution-making bodies would work agreed on Tuesday last in the Conference that they would have to join together in the end to decide the Constitution of the Union and you took no exception to their having a preliminary session in common to decide procedure. What we are proposing is in fact precisely the same thing expressed in different words. I am, therefore, quite at a loss to understand

what you have in mind when you use the words 'this proposal was also categorically turned down by the Congress'.

Further, Pethick Lawrence said, the subject of fundamental rights had been added to the union list after taking into consideration the benefits it would provide both to the large communities and to the small minorities.

Maulana Azad, the Congress President, was also not satisfied with the list drawn up by the Secretary of State for India. He took exception to the compulsory grouping of provinces as also to parity between the wholly unequal groups, as it contained in itself the seeds of conflict and destruction of free growth. He emphasized that the Congress stood for a strong and organic federation. Further, the constituent assembly should have full freedom to draw up its constitution, with certain reservations to protect the rights of the minorities. The need for the federal union to have the power to raise revenues in its own right and currency, customs and other cognate subjects being included in the union list was of great importance. Since planning could only be done effectively at the centre, it should be added to the union list. It should also have the power to take remedial measures in the case of constitutional breakdown or when there was a grave emergency. If, however, agreement between both the parties was not possible and interim government responsible to the elected members of the Central Assembly should be formed at once, matters in dispute concerning the constituent assembly between the Congress and the League could be referred to an independent tribunal.⁷¹

On 9 May, when the conference met again, the points suggested for agreement were taken up for discussion. But the deadlock persisted. At last, Pandit Nehru made a suggestion that one or more representatives of each side should sit together, with an umpire, to discuss points which still remained unresolved, and in case disagreement persisted, the decision of the umpire should be taken as final.⁷² Though it had been generally accepted by Jinnah and the conference had been adjourned until the 11th, nothing was achieved. On learning of this, Cripps wished to fix the responsibility for it on Jinnah. However, this was strongly opposed by Wavell as, 'it would be entirely disastrous to any hope of settlement'. The Secretary of State for India, and Alexander were of the same opinion. Consequently, no action was taken.

But the conference, which opened on 11th, proved equally disastrous as Jinnah refused to have anything to do with the suggestion to resolve the dispute through an umpire or an arbitrator. He further reverted to his original stand that he could consider any proposal only if division of India was accepted. He added that his difference with the Congress was fundamental and could not be resolved.⁷³ Both the major political parties

were, therefore, asked to send their memorandums so that a compromise formula could be evolved.

The memorandum of the Muslim League was based on the principle of formation of a Pakistan group, comprising the six Muslim provinces (Punjab, North-West Frontier Province, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam). They could be grouped together and might deal with all subjects other than foreign affairs, defence and communications necessary for defence. These subjects could be dealt with by the constitution-making bodies of the two groups of provinces — Muslim provinces (hereinafter called Pakistan Group) and Hindu provinces — sitting together; the constitution-making body of the Pakistan Group might, however, determine the lists of subjects that would be provincial and central (of the Pakistan Federation), leaving the residuary powers with the provinces. The constitution-making body would be elected in proportion to the numbers of each community in every province of the Pakistan Group. This arrangement could, however, be reviewed after the constitutions of the Pakistani federal government and the provinces had been finally framed and the wishes of the people of that province had been ascertained by a referendum. A province could secede from the union after an initial period of ten years. The question of providing the union with a legislature should be left for the consideration of the joint constitution-making body, as also that of providing funds for it, though it should not be done by means of taxation. It further said that the union executive and legislature should be constituted on the basis of parity between the two groups of provinces and that no major point in the union constitution which affected a communal issue would be taken as passed unless a majority of the members of the constitution-making body of the Hindu provinces and a majority of the members of the constitution-making body of the Pakistani Group had voted in its favour separately. Besides, decisions on all controversial matters concerning legislature, executive or administration, would be taken by a three-fourths majority. It also provided a clause to protect fundamental rights and safeguard all the religious, cultural and other interests affecting the different communities.⁷⁴

The memorandum submitted by the Congress provided for the formation of a constituent assembly, which would have representatives of each provincial assembly elected on the basis of single transferrable vote and have proportional representation of the two major communities. They should also not constitute more than one-fifth of the total membership of the assembly. Representatives from the States might also be included in a similar manner on the basis of population. The constitution drawn up by the constituent assembly would have a federal union, with a federal government and legislature. It would have the power to deal with all matters concerning foreign affairs, communications,

fundamental rights, currency, customs and planning, and other cognate subjects, and should, in its own right, have the power to raise the funds that it required. Besides, it should have the power to take remedial action in cases of breakdown of the constitution or in grave public emergencies. The memorandum also recommended that the residuary powers should vest in the provinces or units which might form themselves into groups and determine the provincial subjects, which they might like to take in common. The provincial constitution for groups could be framed by the representatives of the provinces after the constitution for the all-India federal union had been settled. Communal rights were also well protected as no matter affecting them could be passed by the constituent assembly unless a majority of the members of the community or the communities concerned was present in the assembly and voted for it separately. However, all disputed issues could be referred for arbitration. The whole constitution could be re-considered or revised after ten years.⁷⁵

In a separate note detailing its reaction to the Muslim League's memorandum, the Congress reiterated its support for a single federal union and a legislature with powers to raise its own revenue and its opposition to parity of representation between the two parties. It also emphasized the protection of rights of all communities by stating that no major communal issue could be taken as settled until a majority of its members were present and voted for it in the constituent assembly. If, however, there was any dispute, the matter could be settled through arbitration. Thus it completely disapproved of the League's proposal that decisions about legislative, executive and administrative matters of the union should have the approval of the three-fourths of the members of the constituent assembly. It at the same time pointed out that acceptance of League's proposals would only safeguard the vested interests and stall the progress or movement in any direction. Further, it wished that any reference to secession should be avoided as it was against encouraging that idea.

Although the viewpoints of the two parties were diametrically opposed to one another yet the conference, as had been settled, met again on 12 May. But the session was short, as it soon became apparent that no useful purpose would be served by prolonging the discussion.⁷⁶ An official communique announced that the cabinet delegation would continue its work and shortly issue a statement indicating the outcome of their discussions and how the delegation would like to proceed further in the matter.

2. The Cabinet Mission's Assessment and Recommendations

While the delegation was still considering the draft of the statement, a

few amendments to the basic policy outlined by Attlee were received. Wavell thought that they had been dictated by an apprehension of criticism from Winston Churchill and other members of the opposition. The amendments dwelt on the possibility of independence within the British Commonwealth, necessity for common defence measures and benefits to India from the British rule. But it was felt that any mention of these points would create suspicion about British intentions and would also go against the carefully adopted policy of the delegation. 'Cripps and even the Secretary of State', wrote Wavell in his Journal, 'became quite bellicose about it and even began to talk of resignation.' In this surcharged atmosphere, Wavell tried to persuade the other members of the delegation to adopt a firm attitude towards the Congress and make clear to them that they could not hope to get a better offer. The stand taken by the viceroy 'pained and shocked' the secretary of state, but he felt that he had been successful in conveying his feelings.⁷⁷

The statement of the cabinet delegation was issued on 16 May. It recalled that the delegation had been charged by the British prime minister with the duty of helping India to attain her freedom 'as speedily and fully as possible', and that they had done their utmost to assist the Indian parties to reach an agreement on the fundamental issue of unity or division of India. Though both the parties were prepared to make considerable concessions, yet they could not reach an agreement, the delegation had, therefore, decided to make immediate arrangements for the Indians to decide the future constitution of India and setting up at once of an interim government.

The delegation noticed that there was an almost universal desire, outside the supporters of Pakistan, that the unity of India should be maintained, and that internal peace could be secured by assuring the Muslim that they could control all matters vital to their cultural, religious, economic or other interests. It also could not close its eyes to 'the very genuine and acute anxiety' amongst the Muslims to ensure that they would not be subjected to Hindu domination. It, therefore, examined both the proposals for a separate sovereign state of Pakistan consisting of 6 provinces claimed by the Muslim League, subject to revision of boundaries subsequently, and also the alternative of a smaller sovereign Pakistan consisting of the Muslim majority areas only, which could perhaps be taken as a basis of compromise. They were, however, unable to recommend the first of these alternatives because they saw no justification for including in such a separate state large non-Muslim elements, which amounted to 37.9 per cent in the north-western area and 48.3 per cent in the north-eastern area. The second alternative was also considered impractical, as it involved exclusion of the Ambala and Jullunder Divisions in the Punjab, the whole of Assam, except the Sylhet District and a large part of Eastern Bengal, including Calcutta. The cabinet

delegation also concluded that the partition of the Punjab and Bengal would be contrary to the wishes and interests of a very large proportion of the inhabitants of those two provinces, besides dividing the Sikhs in the Punjab. Apart from these, weighty administrative, economic and military considerations militated against the creation of a separate sovereign state of Pakistan. In these circumstances, the cabinet delegation could not advise the British Government to transfer power in India to two entirely *separate sovereign states*.

Regarding the Indian States, the delegation viewed that continuance of the existing relationship between the States and the British Crown would not be possible after British India had attained its independence. Besides, paramountcy could neither be retained by the British Crown nor transferred to the new government. It, however, could see that the States could co-operate in the process of framing the constitution by means of discussion and negotiation. The cabinet delegation, therefore, considering the essential claims of all the parties, and that a suitable and practical form of constitution for the whole of India could be established, suggested that the constitution should include:⁷⁸

- (i) Formation of a Union of India of both British India and the States, which might deal with foreign affairs, defence and communications. It should also have the necessary powers to raise the finances required for these subjects.
- (ii) The union executive and a legislature should include representatives from British India and the Indian States, and decisions on all major communal issues in the legislature might be taken by a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting.
- (iii) Vesting of all subjects other than the union subjects and all residuary powers in the provinces.
- (iv) Retention of all subjects and powers other than those ceded to the union by the princely States.
- (v) Freedom to provinces to form groups with executives and legislatures and determination by each group of the provincial subjects which might be taken in common.
- (vi) A provision in the constitution of the union and of the groups that any province could, by a majority vote of its legislative assembly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an initial period of ten years, and at ten-yearly intervals thereafter.

In respect of the machinery for constitution making, the cabinet delegation felt that although election by adult franchise was the most satisfactory basis for the election of the constitution making body, such an election could be held only after a long time. It, therefore, suggested that the recently elected provincial legislative assemblies should be

utilized as the electing bodies. Further, as these assemblies did not fairly reflect the relative sizes of the population of the different provinces, each province could be allotted a total number of seats proportional to its population, roughly in the ratio of one to every million and that allocation of seats between the main communities in each province could be divided in proportion to their population. Further, the representatives allotted to each community in a province should be elected by proportional representation by the members of that community in the provincial legislative assembly. They recognized for this purpose only three communities, viz., General, Muslim and Sikh. Though smaller minorities were to vote with the general community, it suggested that an advisory committee might be formed for the protection of the rights of the minorities and tribal people, and also for compiling a list of their fundamental rights which could be considered by the constituent assembly. The representatives of the provincial legislatures thus selected should meet together as one body along with the representatives of the Indian States at New Delhi as soon as possible and divide themselves into three sections after electing a chairman and a preliminary discussion. The three sections recommended were:

Section A — Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Orissa.

Section B — Punjab, the North-West Frontier Province and Sind.

Section C — Bengal and Assam.

Those three sections of the Constituent Assembly would subsequently settle the provincial constitutions for the provinces within each group, and after any group constitution had been drawn up, they could decide which provincial subjects should be within its purview. Provinces would, however, have the power to opt out of the groups by the decision of their new legislature, when the new constitution had come into force. After the group constitution had been settled, the three sections of the constituent assembly would re-assemble with the representatives of the Indian States for settling the union constitution.

It was also laid down that any resolution which was at variance with the recommendations made by the cabinet delegation as to the basic form of the constitution, and any resolution which raised a major communal issue in the union constituent assembly, would require approval by a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities. Further, the viceroy would forthwith request the provincial legislatures to proceed with the election of their representatives. It also emphasized the necessity of negotiating a treaty between the union constituent assembly and the United Kingdom, so that certain matters arising out of the transfer of power could be provided for. Besides, as constitution making was likely to take some time, and

the administration of India was to be carried on, it was stated that the viceroy would immediately set up an interim government, which would have the support of the major political parties. All the portfolios, including that of the war member, in that government, would be held by Indian leaders, who would have the full confidence of the people. It assured full co-operation from the British Government with the newly formed government in the administration of the country and in bringing about as rapid and smooth a transition as possible.

The statement concluded by stating that, in the absence of an agreement, the cabinet delegation was laying before the Indian people proposals which it hoped would enable them to attain their independence in the shortest possible time and with the least risk of internal disturbances and conflicts. It also hoped that, as the alternative to their acceptance would be grave danger of violence, chaos and even civil war, their proposals would be accepted and operated by the various political parties in the spirit of accommodation and goodwill in which they had been offered. It also stated:

We hope that new independent India may choose to be a member of the British Commonwealth. We hope in any event that you will remain in close and friendly association with our people. But these matters are for your own free choice. Whatever that choice may be, we look forward with you to your ever increasing prosperity among the great nations of the world and to a future even more glorious than your past.

In a broadcast⁷⁹ on 16 May, the Secretary of State for India appealed to the Indian political leaders to give the scheme prescribed by them a cool thought and observed:

The future of India and how that future is inaugurated are matters of vital importance not only to India herself but to the whole world. If a great new sovereign state can come into being in a spirit of mutual goodwill both within and without India that of itself will be an outstanding contribution to world stability.

Explaining the statement further, Sir Stafford Cripps mentioned that it was 'not merely the Mission's statement but the statement of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom' and expressed a hope that the Indian people would accept it in a co-operative spirit and start working on the enormous tasks that demanded their urgent attention.

Wavell in his message described the proposals in the cabinet delegation's statement as 'a blueprint for freedom, an outline of which your representatives have to fill in the details and construct buildings'. He claimed that the proposals preserved the essential unity of India, which was threatened by the dispute between the two major communities and

also removed the danger of the disruption of the Indian Army. They also offered to the Muslim community the right to protect their interests, religion, education, culture, economic and other concerns in their own way and to their best advantage. He further added that the proposals preserved the unity of the Punjab to the advantage of the Sikhs, and permitted them to play an important and influential part in the country's affairs. Besides, the smaller minorities could make their needs known to the special committee for protecting their rights and interests. As for the Indian States, they could enter the polity of united India by negotiation. In fact, he observed:

They [the proposals] offer to India a prospect of peace — peace from party strife, the peace so needed for all constructive work there is to do. And they give you the opportunity of complete independence so soon as the Constituent Assembly has completed its labours. . . . It is the choice between peaceful construction or the disorder of civil strife, between co-operation or disunity, between ordered progress or confusion.

The immediate task, however, was of forming an interim government, which would be a purely Indian government and would include recognized leaders of the main Indian parties 'whose influence, ability and desire to serve India are unquestioned'.⁸⁰

3. Indian Reactions to the Cabinet Mission's Final Proposals

Mahatma Gandhi while, addressing a public meeting, described the Cabinet Delegation's proposals as 'something to be proud of'. He asked the people to examine the proposals not from a parochial standpoint, but from that of the whole country. The delegation and the viceroy had tried to bring the parties together, but they could not bring about an agreement. So they had recommended to the country what in their opinion was 'worthy of acceptance' by the constituent assembly. As the statement was not 'an award', 'it was open for the constituent assembly to vary them, reject them or improve upon them'. It was also open to the constituent assembly to avoid a distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, which the delegation had felt forced to recognize. As regards grouping, no province could be compelled to join a group against its will and it was open for them to reject the very scheme of grouping them. In a letter to the Secretary of State for India, he emphasized the need of withdrawing British troops from India and observed, 'If the position about the troops persists, "independence next month" is either insincere or a thoughtless cry.'

Maulana Azad also, in a letter to the secretary of state, wrote that the Congress looked upon the constituent assembly as a sovereign body and that they would approach the people and members of the constituent

assembly with their own proposals for removing the defects in the recommendations made by the delegation. Further, India should be considered to be independent in fact from the moment when the National Provisional Government was established. The secretary of state was, however, of a different opinion. He considered that the scheme could be taken as a whole and it had a chance to succeed if it was accepted and worked in a spirit of compromise and co-operation. Further, grouping of the provinces was an essential feature of the scheme and that power should be transferred after the constituent assembly had completed its task and made adequate provision for the protection of minorities, besides expressing willingness to conclude a treaty to cover matters arising out of the transfer of power.⁸¹

The Muslim League's reaction to the cabinet delegation's proposals came in a long statement made by Jinnah from Simla, which was published on 22 May. He described the statement as 'cryptic with several lacunas'. He regretted that the mission had negated the Muslim demand for the establishment of a sovereign state of Pakistan and apprehended that Muslim cultural, political and social life might get submerged in a purely unitary India in which the Hindus would be the dominating element. He further pointed out that the safeguards provided for the conduct of business in the union legislature on communal issues were both very vague and ineffective. Yet he still asserted that he was leaving the decision to accept or reject the proposals to the unprejudiced judgement of the Muslim League Working Committee and its Council.⁸²

The Congress Working Committee in its resolution of 24 May raised various points concerning the Statement, particularly in the light of the Congress objectives: the independence of India, a strong though limited central authority with full autonomy for the provinces, and a democratic structure both at the centre and in the units. Besides, it demanded that the fundamental rights of each individual should be so guaranteed that he might have full and quick opportunities of growth and that each community should have the opportunity to lead a life of its choice within the larger framework. It was critical of the compulsory grouping of provinces as this hit directly at the basic principle of provincial autonomy. The committee also took exception to the inclusion of Europeans in the electorate for the constituent assembly for the group comprising Bengal and Assam. However, keeping in view the recommendatory character of the statement and that the reading of various clauses was consistent, it concluded that paragraph 15 of the statement gave the provinces a choice whether or not to belong to the section in which they had been placed. But as the picture was still not complete, the Congress Working Committee decided not to give its final opinion on those proposals.⁸³

The reaction of the Nationalist Muslims was no less critical. They suspected that the proposed proposals were likely to introduce a very harmful and dangerous communal issue which it would take a long time to settle. Master Tara Singh considered that the Sikhs had been deprived of even their existing safeguards and stated that the Sikhs would not accept such a scheme. Similar was the opinion of Prithvi Singh Azad, who was then representing the Depressed Classes in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, President, Forward Bloc, considered that the British intentions to free India could prove convincing only if all political power was handed over immediately to the majority party, 'whose privilege and duty it should be to satisfy all legitimate demands of the minorities'. But to H.N. Kunzru, the viceroy and cabinet delegation's statement was a 'very sincere and courageous attempt on their part' and he urged the Labour Government to do justice to the claims of the various parties.⁸⁴ Sir Abdur Rahim, former President of the Central Legislative Assembly, however, considered the proposed grouping of provinces as a measure of great national importance.⁸⁵

On 25 May the cabinet delegation and the viceroy reiterated that their scheme stood 'as a whole' and it was the desire of His Majesty's Government to transfer power to India as soon as the constituent assembly had completed the framing of the constitution. Besides, it had no intention of retaining British troops on the Indian soil against the wishes of the government of independent India under the new constitution. It further emphasized that the government had made a significant change in their stand by providing that all portfolios, including war, would be held by Indians and that it would provide the Indian government the greatest possible freedom in the exercise of its day-to-day administration. It was also stated that the present constitution would continue during the interim period and that the members of the government could individually, or by common consent, resign, if they failed to pass an important measure through the legislature or if a vote of no confidence was passed against them.⁸⁶

Soon after the publication of the Statement Maulana Azad wrote to the viceroy suggesting that, in his informal conversations, the viceroy had stated that it was his intention to function as a constitutional head of the government and that, in practice, the interim government would have the same powers as a dominion cabinet. He also mentioned his disagreement with the delegation's proposal in regard to the compulsory grouping of provinces and voting rights of the Europeans. He added that a convention might be established to recognize the responsibility of the interim government to the Central Legislative Assembly. Azad, however, wished that such an important issue should not rest on what had transpired in an informal conversation and sought a formal confirmation from Wavell, who, however, denied that he had

given such an assurance. He, however, made it clear that his Majesty's Government had a sincere desire to provide the greatest possible freedom in running the day-to-day administration of the country and stated that, 'I am quite clear that the spirit in which the Government is working will be of much greater importance than any formal document and guarantee. I have no doubt that if you are prepared to trust me we shall be able to co-operate in a manner, which will give India a sense of freedom as soon as the new Constitution is made.'⁸⁷ He further hoped that these assurances would enable the Congress to accept the proposals.

This question had been considered by the members of the delegation also and it was felt that it would not be possible to guarantee complete independence without knowing whether the Congress and the Muslim League could work together and whether the Congress had modified its stand about promoting agitations against rulers in the States. They were, therefore, not prepared to abdicate all authority to one political party as that would invite complete refusal by the Muslim League to co-operate in implementing the proposals. Further, it would mean a break-up of the Indian Army and cause chaos in the country.⁸⁸

Attlee was apprised that the Congress was insisting on plenary powers for the interim government and *de facto* Indian independence, though Jinnah had desired that the authority of the viceroy should remain supreme during the transitional period.⁸⁹

While the Congress was further deliberating on this issue, Sardar Patel, in a letter to Nichaldas C. Vazirani of Karachi, wrote that they could not support the Muslim demand for parity or weightage as that was a negation of democratic principles for which they stood. He felt that the Congress was paying a very heavy price in appeasing the Muslim League and observed, 'In our anxiety to placate the Muslim League, we have diluted nationalism to such an extent that it has lost its original genuine appearance.' He also hoped that the principle of grouping, which the Muslim League had demanded, would be seriously opposed by the rank and file of the League, as they wished to enter the interim government in spite of the pledges given by the party that this could be done only after their demand for the creation of Pakistan was accepted in principle. He further anticipated cracks and quarrels in the Muslim League everywhere.⁹⁰

Thus, while the Congress was striving to secure concessions from the government and was pleading with the delegation to concede them, the viceroy was feeling very unhappy about them. He, in a letter to the secretary of state tried to persuade him to take a stiff attitude on this subject. He also strongly deprecated granting of unilateral concessions

to the Congress and argued that it would only deter the Muslim League from joining the interim government.⁹¹

4. Wavell's Dilemma

The delegation had been deliberating and negotiating for over two months now and had made a sincere effort to resolve the differences between the Congress and the Muslim League. But the chances of success did not seem to be bright. It was, therefore, considered desirable to review the situation and think about the general policy which could be adopted in India. Wavell thought that the Congress had been 'a purely revolutionary movement' and its aim was to obtain control and power at the centre, while the Muslim League was deeply suspicious of the Congress under its existing leadership and, especially of Gandhi. Any attempt at giving the Congress a free hand would thus be not only unjust but also 'fatal to our whole position in the Muslim world'. And amongst the minorities, the Sikhs were the most important, but they were divided 'in both politics and place'. The majority of the people were, however, unconcerned about political affairs but they could be ready tools in the hands of agitators and cause serious communal riots. He further emphasized that if a mass movement was launched by the Congress, 'it would probably be beyond our resources to suppress it, at least without any considerable reinforcements of British troops' and might require imposition of martial law. But he was not sure if His Majesty's Government would agree to take such a step. Nevertheless, he recorded in a note on 30 May: 'A policy of immediate withdrawal of our authority, influence and power from India, unconditionally, would to my mind be disastrous and even more fatal to the traditions and morale of our people and to our position in the world than a policy of repression.'⁹² He, therefore, suggested that the British Government could avoid involvement in this imbroglio by handing over to the Congress full control over the Hindu provinces and by extending support to the Muslim provinces against Hindu domination. Besides, such a threat of division of India could force the Congress to settle its differences with the Muslim League.

The question of formation of an interim government was no less problematic. Everyone was convinced that government without Congress participation could be hardly effective, and if Congress expectations were not fulfilled, they were sure to accuse the British of bad faith, and a crisis could be expected almost at once.⁹³ On the other hand, if a government was formed without the Muslim League joining it, 'grave disorders' in the Punjab and Bengal could not be ruled out.⁹⁴ However, the Congress could be allowed to form a government for the Hindu-majority provinces as a temporary measure while the Muslim League could have a similar government in the Muslim-majority provinces and a

purely official government could carry on the work of the union government. Nevertheless, all efforts should be directed towards the establishment of a Union of India on the best possible terms. The Muslim League could also be informed of the British determination to hand over independence to India and that they might assist it in establishing a complete Pakistan. The Congress could as well be reminded of its repeated assertions that it would allow freedom to those parts of the country which desired it and that they wished to maintain the present position in the Muslim majority provinces until the British thought it proper to move out.⁹⁵

The reaction of the Muslim League was favourable to the delegation's proposals as compulsory grouping of provinces, by implication, provided the basis for establishing a completely sovereign Pakistan — an objective for whose attainment they considered 'no sacrifice or suffering too great'. Yet it reserved to itself the right to revise its policy and attitude at any time during the deliberations of the constitution making body or subsequently in the constituent assembly or thereafter, if the course of events so warranted. Further, it authorized Jinnah to negotiate with the viceroy and settle the arrangements for entering the interim government at the centre.⁹⁶

Hardly the ink on the League documents accepting the delegation's proposals dried, when Jinnah tried to elaborate the Muslim League's stand and observed that the interim government would be constituted, as he had been assured by the viceroy, on the basis of 5:5:2, i.e. 5 Muslim League, 5 Congress, one Sikh and one Indian Christian or Anglo-Indian. Further, the most important portfolios would be shared equally by the League and the Congress. And, to secure confirmation from the viceroy, he threatened that any departure from the assurances given to him would have serious consequences, which would include non-cooperation by the League. The viceroy, however, denied having given such an assurance, though he had been working on that idea. He indicated that, though the principle of parity between the Congress and the Muslim League was illogical as the number of voters that each Party would represent was disproportionate, yet that could provide the basis of an agreement amongst the various parties.⁹⁷ He also invited Jinnah and Nehru for discussions, as Maulana Azad had been taken ill and could not be present. But to Jinnah any discussion on the nature and composition of the interim government without knowing the Congress point of view on the subject was not likely to yield any positive results.⁹⁸

The Sikhs were completely dejected over the recommendations for the future constitution of India. They felt that they had been entirely thrown at the mercy of the Muslims. Sardar Sarmukh Singh Chamak, at a congregation at the Golden Temple on 9 June accused the British of

'trying to atom bomb the Sikhs', while to the Scheduled Castes the safeguards provided for them were 'absolutely illusory and unworthy of serious consideration.'⁹⁹ Palme Dutt, Vice-President of the British Communist Party, considered that the proposals aimed at reconstituting the viceroy's council only and that the freedom of the Indian people to shape their own future was badly shackled.¹⁰⁰

While Wavell was planning to negotiate a settlement between Nehru and Jinnah, he met Patel for clearing the ground with Nehru. He assured Patel '... that he could trust me [Wavell] to see that any attempt by Jinnah or either party to make the Interim Government a battleground to communal politics instead of an instrument for administering India would be prevented.' But Patel seemed to be unconvinced. He felt that Jinnah would join the interim government only to break up India and to use it for communal 'and disruptive purposes'. Nevertheless, he offered to accept any decision which Nehru might reach with Jinnah, and suggested that the plan could succeed if the leaders met alone.¹⁰¹

Jawaharlal Nehru, as suggested by Patel, met the viceroy and Jinnah on 12 June. In the discussions Nehru gave his personal views on the subject, as an authoritative opinion could be expressed by the Congress president alone. Nehru suggested that the interim government should consist of 15 members, which would include 5 from Congress (all Hindus), 4 from Muslim League, one non-League Muslim, one non-Congress Hindu, one Congress Scheduled Caste, one Christian, one Sikh and one Congresswoman. This proposal was, however, not acceptable to Jinnah and was consequently not pursued.

Maulana Azad in his letter of 13 June reiterated the Congress stand on the principle of parity and observed that the viceroy's new proposals regarding formation of the provisional national Government were in fact worse than those suggested at Simla in June 1945, as the Muslim seats were then not reserved for the Muslim League exclusively but permitted inclusion of non-League Muslims in the government. Further, separate group voting on major communal issues would make the working of the provisional government 'almost impossible and deadlock a certainty'. As the country was large and the problems it was facing were enormous, the provisional government should consist of 15 members so as to permit efficient running of the administration. Besides, co-operation of the various minorities could be ensured by providing them some representation in the provisional government. He further underlined the need for chalking out a common programme for ensuring successful functioning of the new government.¹⁰² Nevertheless, on the following day he wrote: 'Yet the friendly tone of your letter and our desire to find some way out led us to accept your assurance in these matters. We came to the conclusion also that, unsatisfactory as were many of the provi-

sions of your Statement of May 16th, we would try to work them according to our own interpretation and with a view to achieve our objective.¹⁰³

The viceroy tried to show his keenness for resolving the deadlock by emphasizing that he had suggested a composition of the interim government on the basis of political parties and not communities and that the new interim government would consist of 13 members, besides himself. It would have six members of the Congress (including one member of the Scheduled Castes), five from the Muslim League and two representatives of the minorities. But it was apparent that the viceroy was unable to modify his stand and form the interim government on a basis other than of weightage to any community. But the formula presented by him was unacceptable to either of the two major political parties. Consequently, it was decided that the cabinet delegation should issue a statement on the action that it proposed to take for forming a coalition government of the two major political parties and certain minorities.¹⁰⁴

The unsatisfactory pace of negotiations and the indecision of the government in resolving the issues was very disturbing to Gandhi. In a letter of 13 June to Wavell, he observed:

You are a right soldier — a daring soldier. Dare to do the right. You must make a choice of one horse or the other. So far as I can see, you will never succeed in riding two at the same time. Choose the names submitted either by the Congress or the League. For God's sake do not make an incompatible mixture and in trying to do so produce a fearful explosion. Anyway fix your time-limit and tell us all to leave when that time is over.¹⁰⁵

This advice did not appear to have any effect on the course of the events. The statement which was issued on 16 June, underlined the need for setting up a strong and representative interim government and entertained a hope that the two major parties would look at the country as a whole and co-operate with each other in the government so that the process of constitution-making as also other problems facing the country could be vigorously pursued. The 14-member executive council which it suggested was to be composed of six Congressmen, including a representative of the Scheduled Castes, five from the Muslim League, one Sikh and one Indian Christian and one Parsi. It was, however, emphasized that the manner of composition of the interim government would in no way be taken as a precedent for the solution of any other communal question. Further, the new government would be inaugurated by the viceroy on 26 June, if these proposals were accepted by the two major political parties. However, if either or both of the political parties did not agree to join the coalition government, the viceroy would form an Interim Government, which would be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the statement of 16 May.

While the Congress was deliberating on the stand it should take, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru pleaded for the acceptance of the proposals and stated: 'On the whole these proposals are fair and they provide a common platform for the time being for the contending parties to meet and work in co-operation with each other for the common good of the country.' But Frank Anthony, leader of the Anglo-Indian community, stigmatized the exclusion of an Anglo-Indian representative as 'a wanton injustice perhaps unequalled in the annals of political history for its sheer irony'.¹⁰⁶

Jinnah was highly critical of the proposals as they provided for parity between the Muslims and caste Hindus and not, as hitherto, between the two major political parties. Since the representative of the Scheduled Castes selected for the Interim Government was a Congressman, he felt that the overall effect of that deviation would adversely affect the proportion of the Muslims. He even questioned the propriety of the Congress nominating a nationalist Muslim as one of its nominees, as that was aimed at dividing the Muslims. Nevertheless, he expressed his keenness about the settlement of portfolios in advance, lest the Congress should create any problem, and a guarantee that no major communal issue would be settled against the Muslim majority vote.¹⁰⁷ The Congress, however, wishing to carry the people of all religions with it and present a unified front suggested, at the instance of Mahatma Gandhi, that one of its nominees should be a nationalist Muslim. It also sought an assurance that the governors would not insist on a declaration accepting the formula regarding grouping of the provinces as a prerequisite for getting eligibility for election to the constituent assembly.

While Wavell initially questioned the right of any party to object to the names put forward by the other and emphasizing that in selecting the nominees 'a test must be that of ability', he soon revised his opinion and considered that the Congress plan of suggesting a Nationalist Muslim as its nominee, even though he might be an able person, was a clever move to ensure refusal by Jinnah and thereby put the onus of breakdown on him. The secretary of state also, trying to bring about a settlement, impressed upon the Congress the need for not pressing the nomination of a Nationalist Muslim as its nominee.¹⁰⁸ He also gave the assurance sought by the Congress about the declaration before entering the legislative assemblies, which was much against the wishes of the viceroy.¹⁰⁹ The latter was even critical of Cripps for showing his bias towards the Congress strongly, even though he himself had admitted that such an assurance and seeking Congress acceptance would leave him 'in an impossible position vis-a-vis Jinnah'.¹¹⁰ He even observed: '... I consider that there has either been a reversal of policy which has not been agreed or that the assurances given to Mr Gandhi is not entirely an honest one.'

He also emphasized that, since the statement of 16 May was not a legal document, it should not be open to interpretation by another body.

But when Azad learnt of the behind the scenes correspondence between the viceroy and Jinnah and the assurances that the latter had received from the former, he expressed his surprise over them in no uncertain terms. He questioned the right of the delegation to refuse acceptance of a suggestion from the Congress for including a Nationalist Muslim amongst its nominees, and invited the attention of the viceroy to his letter of 15 June 1946 wherein he had stated: 'I am afraid that I cannot accept the right of the Congress to object to names put forward by the Muslim League, any more than I would accept similar objections from the other side.' He was also critical of the viceroy assuring Jinnah that any change in the representatives of the minorities, which included the Scheduled Castes, would be made in consultation with the two major parties, when he had himself in his letter of 15 June treated the Scheduled Castes as Hindus and the Congress had also considered them as an integral part of Hindu society. He further disagreed with giving Jinnah any say in the selection of a representative of the Scheduled Castes, as the Congress wished to increase representation of the Scheduled Castes, if an opportunity offered itself, or to give it to another minority community like the Anglo-Indians. In respect of decisions on major communal issues, he added that he had agreed to that principle for the long-term arrangement in the union legislature and the same could be applied to the provisional Government also, provided it was responsible to the legislature and was composed of representatives, on a population basis, of major communities. Since the defects in the scheme were grave and rendered 'the working of the provisional Government difficult and deadlock a certainty', the Congress could not accept the proposal regarding formation of an interim government. Besides, the proposal fell short of Congress objective of full independence and opening of avenues which could lead to improvement in the socio-economic standards of the people. Explaining its viewpoint further, it stated:

The provisional Government must have power and authority and responsibility and should function in fact, if not in law, as a *de facto* independent Government leading to the full independence to come. The members of such a Government can only hold themselves responsible to the people and not to any external authority. In the formation of a provisional or other Government, Congressmen can never give up the national character of the Congress or accept an artificial and unjust parity, or agree to the veto of a communal group.

Nevertheless, it expressed its readiness to join the constituent assembly with a view to framing the constitution of a free, united and democratic India and reiterated the importance of the formation of a representative and responsible provisional government at the earliest possible date.¹¹¹

At the All India Congress Committee meeting, Mahatma Gandhi pleaded for the acceptance of the proposal for constituting the constituent assembly in spite of its defects, as it was both capable of improvement and would 'enable us to make the British quit India'. To Purushottamdas Tandon, it offered an opportunity to frame the constitution of independent India on a 'one man, one vote' basis and counteract the attempts at dividing the country on communal lines.¹¹² Endorsing these views, Azad stated that the proposals of the cabinet delegation contained in the statement of 16 May had offered 'one United India and one Constituent Assembly with one Central Government'. He further mentioned, 'Victory has come into our hands and, please, do not turn it into a defeat. The door to the Constituent Assembly is open to enable us to draw up our own Constitution. Please enter it and complete our task of framing our own Constitution.' Pandit Nehru agreed that there were many difficulties and snags, but it was for them to take advantage of that opportunity and work out the scheme to their advantage. 'If we do not succeed in the Constituent Assembly,' he said 'we change our tactics to suit whatever form we want to do.' But he was critical of the delegation's proposal to bind India to follow a definite course of action after ten years and asserted, 'when India is free, India will do just what she likes. It is quite absurd and foolish to lay down now what she is going to do a few years hence.'

The viceroy, nevertheless, assured Jinnah that no change of principle would be made without the consent of the two major political parties and that no change in the number of 14 members would be made without an agreement between them. And, if any seat fell vacant among the representatives of the minorities, he would fill it up after consulting the two major parties. Further, any decision on major communal issues, or the proportion of the members of the respective communities would not be changed without the agreement of the two parties.¹¹³

Jinnah, however, contested the claim of the Congress of being national in character and said that the Congress was making such statements only to divide the Muslims, which the Muslim League could not permit. He further considered that such a claim by the Congress was a bogus one as had been well demonstrated by the results of the last elections to the provincial legislative assemblies. He even criticized the members of the delegation and the viceroy for being overzealous in securing the success of the mission and succumbing to the Congress threat of resorting to a civil disobedience movement. He hoped that the delegation's scheme would be fully exposed during the Parliamentary debates, which would follow shortly. The Muslim League in its statement of 25 June 1946 clarified that it was willing to co-operate in the proposed constitution-making machinery 'in the hope that it would ultimately result in the establishment of a complete sovereign Pakistan'.

But it reserved to itself the right to revise its policy and attitude at any time during the progress of the constitution-making.¹¹⁴ Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, however, felt that the circumstances under which the Muslim League had accepted the proposals of the cabinet delegation and the viceroy had undergone a change, as the British side had gone back on their word and postponed the formation of the interim government and according to the proposals of 16 May, were giving an interpretation about the grouping of the provinces which was totally opposite to the previous authoritative statements of the cabinet delegation. He, therefore, urged upon the League to reconsider their stand and adopt a course of action which might suit the changed conditions.¹¹⁵

Rejection of the terms on which the Congress had been asked to join the interim government obliged the delegation to act upon its statement of 16 May and it started the process of formation of an interim government *de novo*, which to Jinnah had been dishonestly 'concocted by the legalistic talents of the Cabinet Mission'.¹¹⁶ However, when Jinnah criticized the delegation for being neither fair nor just and going back on their word, the viceroy repudiated the charge and asserted that Jinnah was aware of the course of action which the delegation was suggesting even before the Working Committee of the Muslim League had met. He further indicated that the process of holding elections to the Constituent Assembly would not be postponed.¹¹⁷

At the Muslim League Council meeting, which was subsequently convened, Jinnah observed that the Congress was full of spite towards the Muslims and the cabinet delegation, which was intellectually paralysed, had played into the hands of the Congress, and that as the League could not expect any justice and fair play from the British Government, it had withdrawn its acceptance of the proposals of the secretary of state and decided to resort to 'Direct Action' for achieving its goal of an independent and fully sovereign state of Pakistan. It also called upon all the Muslims to renounce the titles conferred upon them by the British Government.¹¹⁸

While the machinery for holding of elections to the Constituent Assembly was being geared up and the viceroy was contemplating the formation of the Interim Government in terms of the 16 May statement, the delegation left for England on 29 June in the hope that 'ere long you will realise what you want'. But there was profound disappointment over the return of the delegation empty-handed. The *Manchester Guardian* critically summing up the situation observed: 'It is still far from clear that either the Muslim or Congress leaders feel able to work together. The failure to agree on the formation of an Interim Government has an ugly look and may have serious consequences. Many

delicate questions are likely to arise connected with the formation, procedure and power of the Constituent Assembly.¹¹⁹

In the House of Commons, when the results of the cabinet delegation's visit to India were discussed, Winston Churchill charged the government of having gone beyond the offer of 1942 and offering full independence instead of dominion status, which would leave the final decision to a fully constituted Dominion of India, after the whole situation had been reviewed.¹²⁰ But the Labourites could not agree with that allegation. Replying to the criticism, A.V. Alexander stated that reverting to the proposals of 1942 was not possible in the wake of political opinion in the world, especially in the East. He added: 'If some attempt had not been made to get the agreement we have so far secured in India, I am certain that we should have been faced with uprisings, bloodshed and disturbances in India at the moment, and with a future military commitment that nobody could at present forecast.'¹²¹

Thus ended the efforts of the cabinet delegation to find a solution to the Indian political problem.

The cabinet delegation had come to India at a time when it was conceded that the future of India was of vital concern not only to India but also to the whole world. Stabilization of the democratic principles for which the World War II had been fought and won demanded a change in the British attitude towards India. A spirit of accommodation and goodwill was all that was expected from the newly established Labour Government in England. The Labour leaders were, therefore, called upon to evolve a plan which would convince their party men and others that they were sincere in settling the Indian political problem without resorting to bloodshed. Besides, the confidence of the British people that they could govern India had been shaken and they lacked the courage to carry on with this responsibility. At the same time, Indian strength to resist British oppression had by then become sufficiently effective, which the British Government could hardly have overlooked. They were in fact resolved to establish that the fate of nations and the affairs of human beings could be settled by peaceful mutual adjustments and not as hitherto by resorting to war and bloodshed.

The cabinet delegation had come to India with an open mind and had no cut and dried solution for the Indian problem. In a bid to study the complexities of the situation, it opened discussions with both the officials and the Indian leaders. While the former favoured a cautious approach, the parleys with the latter developed into long interviews and, at times, endless discussions, which to Wavell appeared to be a result of unbusinesslike handling by the members of the delegation. He even charged that 'the Mission was too prone to parade the weakness of our position' and never made an attempt to show as bold a front as was

possible. Nevertheless, the members of the delegation were sincere in their mission and did not wish it to end in a fiasco. They met the Indian leaders both at the official meetings, where they would be taking their stand, as also personally to know and influence their minds and guide the course of discussions in a positive manner. But to Wavell, again, that approach was open to grave criticism, for it aroused deep suspicion in the Muslim League and kept it away from heart to heart talks. He even took objection to unofficial contacts between the officials of the delegation and the Congress, and observed: 'I do not approve, of course, of the political practice of using hunting jackals to nose out scraps of information behind the back of the principals to a negotiation.' He was, however, himself noticed to have corresponded with Jinnah at a crucial moment without permitting the Congress to have an inkling of what was being discussed and settled behind their back. He, in fact, time and again championed the cause of the Muslim League during the closed-door discussions amongst the members of the delegation.

Individually, all the members of the delegation were seasoned politicians and had high standing in the Labour Party. Pethick Lawrence was genuinely non-violent and tried to convince the Indian leaders of his sincerity and honesty of purpose. Alexander, though not well conversant with the Indian situation, was quick in grasping the points at issue and exercised good judgement. Cripps, however, emerged as the ablest member of the delegation. He had a good perception of the Indian situation. He also had an acute legal mind and had an immense capacity to make 'every black and white appear neutral and acceptable grey'. Besides, he was an excellent draftsman and very good at finding a compromise solution to any problem. No wonder, he exercised great influence on the course of the discussions and quite often invited criticism from the viceroy. Wavell felt that he did not enjoy the full confidence of the Labour Government and members of the delegation discussed things behind his back. This made him extremely suspicious of their moves, as also of the Congress with whom they often discussed the question of resolving the existing political tangle. He, being a soldier by profession, wished to demonstrate British strength when it was on the retreat, and to keep the initiative and direction of the course of negotiations with it. He stated that the delegation 'negotiated as supplicants asking for favours rather than masters granting them'. He strongly deprecated granting of any concession to the Congress and tried to tilt the balance in favour of the Muslim League by suggesting that unhappiness of the Muslim League was likely to adversely affect British relations with the Muslim world. Nevertheless, he regretted for taking a firm stand in the public against the Muslim League's demand to be recognized as the sole representative of the Indian Muslims.

The Muslim League, having inflamed the ignorant and impression-

able co-religionists with an idea of Pakistan as 'a new Prophet's Paradise on earth', harped on its traditional slogan of 'Islam in danger' and tried to enhance its prestige, and power, and bargaining values as a party. It was argued that Hindu predominance in any future set up would be anathema for the Muslims and that they could not expect justice or fairness from the Hindus. Jinnah, though a lonely, unhappy and a self-centred man, fought the battle for a separate sovereign state of Pakistan with much resolution. He visualized the continued presence of the British to protect Muslim interests, and was against the powers of the Governor-General of India being whittled away. He even used the Muslim League Council meetings as a lever to force His Majesty's Government to announce their adherence to the promises on the basis of which the Muslim League had accepted the delegation's scheme. He believed that nomination of a Nationalist Muslim by the Congress would make it difficult for the Muslim League to present 'an unbroken and united front' against the Congress and apprehended that the latter by subtle flattery and material inducements would win over more Muslims to their side and fatally divide the Muslim ranks. However, when it was noticed that he could not exercise a veto on the question of the inclusion of a Nationalist Muslim in the interim government, he gave a call to the Muslims to unite and establish a full sovereign Pakistan.

The Congress, wedded to democratic principles, tried to do justice to the variety of claims made on it and to carry the country as a whole with it. It was aware that a strong centre was essential for the sustenance and prosperity of the country and, consequently, it could not be expected to encourage compartmentalization or formation of groups of provinces on a compulsory basis as it denied the autonomy of the provinces and removed the keystone from the constitutional arch. Nevertheless, it wished to enter the Constituent Assembly in a constructive spirit rather than for creating trouble or wrecking it. Having accepted the cleverly worded statement made by the cabinet delegation on 16 May, it did not propose to tear it to pieces, though it had its own interpretation of it. It objected to the principle of parity in the formation of the interim government, which it had accepted earlier, primarily because now a provisional government, with a Constituent Assembly, offered every prospect of perpetuating itself in a permanent set-up, which it wished should be democratically based and devoid of any weightage. It was also against providing veto power to any community as that would inevitably get woven into the fabric and create disharmony in the new state. In fact, its scheme of a strong centre with compulsory and optional powers tried to extend full protection to Muslim interests as also those of the minorities.

Mahatma Gandhi, though not a member of the negotiating committee of the Congress, exercised great influence, though to Wavell 'he still remains the evil genius of the Congress'. He stood for Congress project-

ing itself as a non-communal secular party. He was also able to carry the Congress Party with him in spite of the heavy pressure from the members of the delegation for not putting forward a Nationalist Muslim for the interim government. Nehru, with his charming personality, had endeared himself to both the members of the delegation and the viceroy and was also accepted in the Congress as the first amongst equals. He was convinced that the independence of India was imminent and that nothing which might adversely affect the unity of the country should be done or accepted. He strongly felt that Pakistan was not in the interests even of the Muslims themselves, and that it could only exist as a feudatory state under British domination. He also favoured democratization of Indian states and their falling in with the Indian mainstream. Azad was noted for his ability and moderation and consequently enjoyed the confidence of all the party members. Patel was, however, the recognized 'tough' of the Congress Working Committee and enjoyed great respect. He had courage and conviction and much foresight. He had warned his colleagues that Jinnah's aim in entering the interim government would be purely communal and for disruptive purposes and to break up India, and that the interim government would be a battleground for communal politics instead of an instrument for ushering in a new era of prosperity in independent India.

The Sikhs were against compulsory grouping of the provinces and felt that the delegation, by depriving them of any safeguards, had made an invidious distinction. Consequently, they decided to abstain from the elections to the Constituent Assembly. But they retracted this decision when they were reminded that they could not cut themselves away from the rest of their country. The Scheduled Castes led by Ambedkar felt that the cabinet delegation's statement was a complete breach of faith and the British stood guilty before the bar of public opinion for not protecting Scheduled Caste rights.

The cabinet delegation's plan was as good as could have been framed under the circumstances. It had the germ of a good and workable compromise in the 3-tier scheme. The offer of full independence was made in good faith and provided a prospect of an Indian government which would end an epoch of British imperialism. It had recorded its appreciation of the Muslim sentiments but had ruled out their demand for an independent state of Pakistan as impractical. The creation of Pakistan could not solve the problem of communal tension as 38 per cent of the population in the Western Group and 42 per cent in the Eastern Group were Hindus. Besides, it was sure to raise many insoluble issues like the effective defence of the subcontinent, maintenance of a unified postal, telegraph, and transport system. Although the Muslim League opposed it and had given a call for 'Direct Action' for the establishment of an independent sovereign state of Pakistan, yet the plan of the cabinet

delegation was a charter of India's political progress in envisaging a union of India with scope for communal harmony. In the formulation of this scheme, the Congress had also played a very positive role. It tried hard to remove the imaginary apprehensions of the Muslims about justice and a fair deal. The delegation's plan was also elastic enough to allow for fresh agreements and produce new harmony, which would be conducive to peace.

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Chapter IX

On the Eve of the Transfer of Power: Congress-Muslim League Interaction

Vinod Bhatia, Sneh Mahajan

THE PERIOD BETWEEN July 1946 and February 1947 forms the epilogue to the Cabinet Mission negotiations and the prelude to the announcement regarding the transfer of power made on 20 February 1947. The Cabinet Mission, which left India on 29 June 1946, had made recommendations regarding the creation of an interim inter-party executive to assume immediate responsibility and the bringing together of a representative Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution for free India. For the first time, Indians recognized that the British really meant to transfer power to them. As the zero hour drew nearer, Indian politics entered a period of intense excitement, protracted negotiations and bitter controversies, during which two major parties — the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League — were to struggle for fulfilment of their respective goals.

For the Congress, this period represented the climax of its struggle for national independence. That its acceptability surpassed that of any other party in India was conceded even by Wavell, the viceroy, who pointed out in a conference of governors held on 8 August 1946, at Delhi, that though he had 'great sympathy with the Muslims' he had to bear in mind that 'the Congress controlled three-fourths of British India. In the Congress Provinces that party had almost a monopoly of power. They could, if they wished, make Government impossible.'¹ As compared to 5,10,000 in 1928, the number of its primary members had increased to 55,28,000 in 1946. In the assembly elections of 1946, Congress had polled 190 lakh votes as compared to 45 lakh polled by the Muslim League and 26 lakh by all other parties combined.² The Congress looked upon itself as a national body and stood uncompromisingly for the ideal of a secular state in which all Indians, irrespective of creed, caste or colour, would enjoy equal status. Since the Ramgarh Congress session of 1940 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had been its president. In 1946, out of fifteen members of its Working Committee, three were Muslims. In the elec-

tions too, Congress had always projected its secular image and all suggestions that it should make electoral adjustments with the Hindu Mahasabha, were ruled out.³ Gandhiji voiced the policy of the Congress when he wrote to the viceroy: 'In so far as I am aware, the Congress claims to know both the Hindu and Muslim mind more than you or any Britisher can do.'⁴ Congress took the stand that an independent India would accept the obligation to give a fair treatment to the minorities and that the British could not impose it by pressure or force. In his address at the All India Congress Committee session at Bombay when assuming office as President of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru, outlining the nature of the independent Indian state, said:

The kind of independence the Congress has aimed at is the establishment of a united democratic Indian Federation, with a central authority which would command respect from the nations of the world, maximum provincial autonomy, equal rights for all men and women in the country.⁵

The Muslim League, on the other hand, was a politico-religious organization which made every effort to project an image of itself as the sole spokesman of the Muslims and wanted the Congress to recognize it as such. But this claim, given its performance during 1945-46 elections, seemed dubious. Of the four Muslim majority provinces, it was able to form a ministry only in Bengal. The North-West Frontier province was under Congress control, Punjab was governed by the Unionists and in Sind the Muslim League was dependent on Congress sufferance.

The task of inducing the Congress and the Muslim League to co-operate fell to the viceroy who prided in describing himself as 'neither a lawyer nor a politician but a plain man'.⁶ He found his task 'very wearying and depressing'. He confessed to King George VI that this exasperating business reminded him of one of his childhood puzzles — a little glass-covered box with three or four different-coloured marbles which one had to manipulate into their respective pens by very gentle oscillation; just as the last one seemed on the point of moving in, some or all the others invariably ran out.⁷ The Governor of Bengal also remarked that there seemed to be more difficulty in handing India back to the Indians than Clive had had in conquering it.⁸ The viceroy and senior British officials made no effort to conceal their sympathy for the League, which impelled Nehru to complain about 'a mental alliance' between them and the Muslim League. Liaquat Ali Khan was even told that, when there was friction between the viceroy and the Congress, it was largely due to former's desire not to let down the Muslims.⁹ For the Congress they had distrust and misgivings which are writ large on official correspondence.

On 29 June the Cabinet Mission went back with the impression that

the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had accepted their long-term solution and not the one relating to the formation of an interim government. In fact, as we shall see, the opposite happened. First the Congress and then the Muslim League entered the Interim Government while the Muslim League refused to join the Constituent Assembly.

1. Formation of an Interim Government

At the first meeting of the caretaker government, the viceroy had told the members that he would try to get rid of them as soon as possible.¹⁰ But this proved a not inconsiderable task by reason of continuing difficulties in negotiating a representative alternative. On 23 July Nehru had sent his reply to viceroy's letter of the previous day asking whether the Congress and the League respectively would be willing to enter an Interim Government on the basis of conditions spelled out by him.¹¹ The viceroy telegraphed the secretary of state to say that he interpreted Nehru's letter, coupled with information from other sources, as indicating that the Congress had decided on 'a definite and aggressive line of action' and that the letter amounted to 'an inevitable challenge by Congress to their [British] authority'.¹² The secretary of state, after discussions with the prime minister and his colleagues of the Cabinet Mission, advised the viceroy to proceed prudently, observing: 'we feel that it would be fatal to deal with Nehru's letter on the assumption that it is a final challenge' and that, at his forthcoming meeting with Nehru, the viceroy should proceed on the twin assumptions that Nehru wished to reach a settlement and that he (the viceroy) was not prepared to contemplate failure to do so.¹³ The viceroy acquiesced condescendingly.¹⁴

The Muslim League replied to viceroy's letter of 22 July by passing two resolutions at the All India Muslim League Council meeting at Bombay on 29 July. These gave a new turn to the situation. In the first, which ran into some fifteen hundred words, the League Council formally stated very forcefully Jinnah's complaint of a breach of faith with the Muslim League on the part of the viceroy in respect of the negotiations for the setting up of an Interim Government, then went on to comment that the contents of the speeches by Congress leaders, and especially that by Nehru at his press conference of 10 July, more clearly than before, signaled Congress non-acceptance of 'the fundamentals of the scheme'. It also stated that the response of the secretary of state, as expressed in parliament, amounted to no more than 'a mere expression of pious hope' in the Congress sense of fairness to other parties, which, it was alleged, fell far short of the machinery required to prevent the Constituent Assembly from taking decisions 'which would be *ultra vires*' and the lack of which would leave it open to 'an overwhelming Hindu

Caste Majority to use the Assembly as it suited them'. The council, therefore, resolved to withdraw its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's proposals which had been communicated to the Secretary of State for India on 6 June 1946. In the second resolution, the council gave vent to its resentment and declared that it would resort to direct action. It stated that

whereas Muslim India has exhausted all efforts to find a peaceful solution of the Indian problem by compromise and constitutional means and . . . whereas recent events have shown that power politics and not justice and fair-play are deciding factors in Indian affairs . . . the Council of the All India Muslim League is convinced that now the time has come for the Muslim nation to resort to Direct Action to achieve Pakistan, to assert their just rights, to vindicate their honour and to get rid of the present British slavery and the contemplated future caste-Hindu domination . . .¹⁵

To the secretary of state it seemed that these resolutions had created a 'novel and serious situation' which called for immediate action.¹⁶ As soon as news about the decision taken by the League reached London, a meeting of the India and Burma Committee of the Cabinet was held where it was decided that it was 'impossible to allow Jinnah's non-cooperation to hold up progress with the formation of an Interim Government' and that if the League refused to co-operate, Nehru, as Congress President, should be invited to form an Interim Government.¹⁷

By this time, Lord Wavell, too, was not averse to the idea. He had held steadfastly that neither the Constituent Assembly nor the Interim Government could be a success with the Muslim League standing aloof and liable to become at some stage actively hostile.¹⁸ But, as he himself 'regretfully' noted, the League resolutions did not even contain any 'escape clause' which would have allowed the negotiations to continue. He also noted that the 'League resolution will certainly increase communal tension in the towns which is already bad. Widespread labour trouble exists also and the general situation is most unsatisfactory.'¹⁹ He was also worried about the weakening of British authority which he thought would be the 'inevitable consequence' of their impending departure, the inadequacy of police force at his disposal, the fragility of the 'steelframe' which was, as the Governor of Bengal put it, 'now more like lath and plaster, and more plaster than lath', and about the difficulty of taking action against 'big men'.²⁰ In a meeting of governors on 8 August, when it was pointed out that Jayaprakash Narayan was continuing to preach rebellion and the ministries were incapable of dealing with him, the viceroy said that the administration was not 'strong enough' 'at present' to arrest the 'big men', and the Congress ministries were in the same difficulty. If the Congress came in at the centre they might possibly feel strong enough to take action.²¹ All these considerations convinced

Wavell of the need to have a central government which could command the support of the people, and since only the Congress could be such a party, he tried to get the Congress, though he disliked 'intensely the idea of having an Interim Government dominated by one party'. In a telegram to the secretary of state, he pointed out:

The most urgent need is for a Central Government with popular support. If Congress will take responsibility they will realise that firm control of unruly elements is necessary and they may put down the communists and try to curb their own left wing. Also I should hope to keep them so busy with administration that they had much less time for politics.²²

There were other advantages as well. 'The Congress might then recognise the necessity of direct negotiations with Jinnah and ask me to postpone the Constituent Assembly, until some arrangement had been reached', calculated Wavell.

Accordingly, on 6 August, the viceroy invited Jawaharlal Nehru, 'as President of the Congress', to submit proposals regarding the formation of an Interim Government on the basis of assurances given in his letter of 30 May to Maulana Azad. The viceroy did not let slip the opportunity of holding on to the Muslim parcel. 'It will be for you to consider whether you should first discuss them with Mr Jinnah; if you were able to reach an agreement with him, I should naturally be delighted.'²³ The League's threat of direct action and the impetuosity of Jinnah's attitude also made Congress more anxious to push ahead.

The Congress Working Committee was scheduled to meet at Wardha from 8 August. At this meeting, Nehru was authorized to go ahead with the formation of a provisional national government.²⁴ Thereafter, Nehru wrote to the Viceroy that the Congress would have welcomed the formation of a coalition government with the Muslim League; but in view of the resolution adopted by the League and the statements made on its behalf, it was not possible to expect that it would agree to co-operate at that stage and that any premature attempt to induce it to do so might produce a contrary result. In view of this, Nehru suggested that it would be best if the viceroy first made a public announcement to the effect that he had made the offer to the President of the Congress who had accepted it. It would then be advisable on his (Nehru's) part to invite co-operation from the League.²⁵ The viceroy accepted this suggestion and, on 12 August, invited Nehru formally to form an Interim Government. The very next day Nehru wrote a very courteous and friendly letter to Jinnah inviting his co-operation in establishing 'a government as representative as possible' in order to deal with urgent problems facing the country. Jinnah did not accept this offer.²⁶

The stage was thus set for 'Direct Action' by the League the

next day and the formation of the Interim Government *sans* the Muslim League. The period following saw communal violence on an unprecedented scale.

2. 'Direct Action' by Muslim League (16 August 1946)

The Muslim League resolution of 29 July calling upon the 'Muslim nation' to resort to direct action also authorized its Working Committee 'to prepare forthwith a programme of direct action to carry out the policy enunciated above and to organise the Muslims for the coming struggle to be launched as and when necessary'.²⁷ In his concluding speech on this fateful day, Jinnah declared that, by passing this resolution, the Muslim League was bidding 'goodbye to constitutional methods'. He recalled that throughout the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission the other two parties, the British and the Congress, had each held a pistol in their hands, the one of authority and the other of mass struggle and non-cooperation. 'Today', he said, 'we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it.'²⁸ Subsequently, 16 August was fixed as Direct Action Day.

There is no evidence to suggest that Jinnah himself planned or even desired the holocaust let loose at Calcutta and other places on that date. Liaquat Ali Khan, who later became the leader of the Muslim League in the Interim Government, even commented that 'Mr Jinnah was an old man and probably hated the idea of going to jail. He [Liaquat] personally and his wife liked their comforts, but they saw no alternative in present conditions.'²⁹ He also said that the shedding of British and Muslim blood would be deplorable, but that it was 'better than slow strangulation'. Once the decision was taken, the Muslim press flooded the country with propaganda calculated to inflame communal bitterness and defiance of law and authority.

On 8 August, the viceroy called a conference of governors to discuss the situation and here they confessed that they had no idea what 'direct action' was likely to mean. One reason for their not viewing the situation with alarm was their belief that this would be 'a straight fight between the Muslims and the Hindus'.³⁰ Sir John Colville, Governor of Bombay, foresaw in this decision a plan to get Pakistan. In a letter of 4 August 1946, he wrote rather prophetically:

Jinnah probably reckons that Congress with its insistent left wing cannot brook indefinite delay, and that if he succeeds in holding up progress long enough, there will be a widespread outbreak of violence with which we should have to cope. He may then calculate that if we succeed in putting down Congress we will give him Pakistan, while on the other hand, if chaotic conditions result for a considerable period, the Muslims in majority areas may be able to help themselves to some sort of *de facto* Pakistan. . . . I

think that Jinnah counts on trouble to break out in order to give him his chance.³¹

Even after this July 29 resolution of the League, the Congress Working Committee at Wardha passed a resolution with the aim of enlisting the co-operation of the League. It reiterated that, while the Congress did not approve of all the proposals contained in the statement of 16 May, they accepted the scheme in its entirety. It also emphasized that the use of the expression 'sovereign' in relation to the Constituent Assembly, to which Jinnah had taken exception, implied the Assembly's right to function and draw up a constitution for India without the interference of any external power or authority, but that the Assembly would seek the largest co-operation in drawing up the constitution for free India, allowing the greatest measure of freedom and protection for all just claims and interests.³²

This clarification did not satisfy Jinnah who commented wryly, 'the situation remains where it was and we are where we were'.³³ The Chief Ministers of Sind and Bengal, the two provinces with Muslim League ministries, advised the governors to declare 16 August a public holiday so as to avoid trouble. This was done in spite of strong protests in the Bengal Legislative Assembly where Congress members staged a walk-out.³⁴ Congress leaders later complained that the declaration of a public holiday made 'the hooligans of the Calcutta underworld' believe that they had the licence of the government to act as they liked.³⁵

Direct Action day was 'celebrated' all over India on 16 August by holding meetings, taking out processions and organizing big rallies. The day passed off without any notable incident except in Calcutta, where it unleashed unprecedented bloodshed and bestiality. During the four days that followed, riot, murder, arson and pillage were rampant, causing heavy damage to life and property. The administration in Bengal was in the hands of the League ministry headed by H.S. Suhrawardy. Armed Muslim communal groups looted and murdered while the administration watched. It is generally agreed that during the first two days the police force did not take any steps to control the mob and curb lawlessness. Reporting about his visit to the city on Saturday, 17 August, the Governor of Bengal, Sir F. Burrows, reported to the Viceroy:

The attitude of the police party escorting me, the fortress commander and the Chief Secretary on our tour was unsatisfactory and lends colour to the allegations that during the early stages of the disturbances the police force as a whole were not very willing to resort to firing.³⁶

Curfew was not enforced even after it was proclaimed on the first two nights. The governor called in the army too late. He reported that during

the first four days of the 'pogrom', Chief Minister Suhrawardy's commitment as the most influential member of the League in Bengal overpowered his sense of responsibility as member-in-charge of the Home portfolio. He wrote that Suhrawardy showed 'an exasperating pre-occupation with the sufferings undergone by members of his own community' and that he spent a great deal of time in the control room at Lall Bazar often attended by some of his supporters which made it 'extremely difficult' for the Commissioner of Police 'to give balanced decisions on all numerous calls for help that were pouring in'.³⁷

Three days later, the Hindus and Sikhs took the law into their own hands and indulged in savage reprisals. Thereafter the army took charge and gradually the situation was brought under control. Feelings were entirely communal, not anti-police or anti-government. There was not a single case of attack on a European or Anglo-Indian. Shops owned by Europeans were left alone. This holocaust, lasting for five days, left 4,400 dead, 16,000 injured and over 1,00,000 homeless.³⁸ It was symptomatic of increasing communal tension on the one hand, and of diminishing British capacity and inclination to exercise effective control, on the other.

The violence that erupted in Calcutta unleashed an irrevocable chain reaction in other parts of India which continued for a year. On 10 October, the scene shifted to two most inaccessible districts in the Gangetic Delta in East Bengal — Noakhali and Tipperah. There were cases of loot, arson, murder, rape and forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam which demonstrated that communal hatred was fast spreading to the rural areas as well. This continued for about a week, though news of events reached the outside world only on 20 October. The number of people actually killed was probably 'not more than 300 at the outside', but there had been widespread panic and the refugee problem had become serious.³⁹

The news of events in Bengal affected Biharis profoundly because a large number of them lived in Calcutta and there was also a large Bengali population in Bihar. Many of the relatives of these Biharis returned to Bihar, carrying with them accounts of what had happened in Bengal. Some pamphlets also seem to have been distributed calling for revenge. The first riot in Bihar occurred in Benibad on 27 September, followed by one in Mungher on 8 October. On 25 October, murder and arson began in Chapra town on a scale more intense than had happened in East Bengal. From 31 October, trouble spread rapidly in Patna and Bhagalpur. Bihar's tragedy resembled Bengal's worst one in severity. Estimates of casualties varied greatly. Some fifty villages in Patna district and about the same number in the two districts of Chapra and Bhagalpur were affected. Other parts of Bihar remained free from violence. About

400 people were killed, though some placed the figures much higher. There were cases of communal outbreaks in Bombay, Ahmedabad and Garmukteshwar in UP also.⁴⁰

The 'Great Calcutta Killing' and its aftermath marks a turning point in India's history. It made a compromise solution to the issue of abdication of British power more difficult. To both sides it seemed to provide convincing evidence that the other party might use its position in the government to suppress them. The Chief Secretary to the Government of Sind reported that, whereas Muslims resented what they considered to be attempts to make capital against the League out of a calamity in which Muslims have suffered equally with other communities, the Hindus harped on the alleged insecurity of their lives and property under a Muslim League administration and demand unlimited assurances from the leaders of the Muslim League.⁴¹

This affected the attitude of men in the civil services as well. In June 1947, when civil officials and employees of the Bengal and Punjab Governments were given the option to select the government they wished to serve. In the context of what happened during these riots, the officials felt totally insecure at the prospect of serving under a government controlled by persons of religious persuasions different to their own. Consequently, the civil officials, in overwhelming numbers, exercised their options on the basis of religion, though the options were entirely free.⁴²

Though these violent events in Calcutta had taken place before the formal announcement regarding the appointment of the Interim Government was made, yet the viceroy held the new government responsible for the violence that erupted. The obvious step was to dismiss the Muslim League ministry in power at Calcutta. Indeed, Cripps during his stay in India, had promised Patel that, in case of communal trouble, the government would immediately put section 93 of the Act of 1935 into operation.⁴³ But Wavell instead thought in terms of not allowing Congress to form an Interim Government at the centre. 'Far from having any sobering effect it has increased communal hatred and intransigence,' he wrote to the secretary of state, suggesting that Nehru should be asked to go in for a coalition government.⁴⁴ It was only the secretary of state's admonitory reprove, delivered in most unambiguous terms, asking the viceroy 'not to take any steps which are likely to result in a breach with the Congress without prior consultation with us, as the consequences of such a breach would also be very grave',⁴⁵ which led the viceroy to desist from pressing the issue.

3. Congress Forms an Interim Government

In the meanwhile, negotiations were going on between the viceroy and

Nehru on the formation of the Interim Government. On 17 August, Nehru explained to the viceroy that his idea was to include in the government six Congress nominees, three minority representatives, and to fill the five Muslim seats with non-League Muslims. The viceroy was averse to accepting the last suggestion. He wanted that these seats should be left vacant rather than be filled by 'stooge' Muslims. Nehru also expressed a desire to raise the number of members in the new cabinet to fifteen 'for more efficient discharge of functions' as also to enable a representative of the Anglo-Indian community to be included.⁴⁶ But, while the viceroy accepted the wisdom of the proposal, he did not give his consent on the ground that it would make the League's joining the government more difficult and added that 'the matter of paramount importance is to leave no stone unturned to get the Muslim League to join the Executive Council'.⁴⁷ In fact, all matters relating to the number of the members of the executive council, distribution of portfolios, representation of minorities etc. were viewed by the viceroy in the light of the likely reaction of the Muslim League. This exasperated Nehru. On 22 August 1946, before the formation of Interim Government was formally announced, he wrote to the viceroy:

I do not know what your conception is of the proposed Provisional Government. Is it going to be just another kind of Caretaker Government waiting and hoping for the Muslim League to walk in when it feels inclined to do so? That would simply mean an ineffective unstable Government which cannot undertake anything worthwhile and which exists more or less on sufferance. . . . We do not believe that cooperation will come out of appeasement of wrong doing. . . . The time will surely come when all of us, or most of us, will cooperate together. It will be retarded by wrong tactics and approaches. We must have a strong and stable ship if we are to face it with confidence.⁴⁸

Congress was also not willing to surrender on some other points which it deemed important and among these were the inclusion of a Muslim in the Congress quota in the Interim Government and its stand on the statement of 16 May regarding grouping of provinces. Nehru insisted that the country needed 'a strong, virile, active and stable Government which knows its mind and had the courage to go ahead, not a weak, disjointed, apologetic Government which can be easily bullied or frightened and which dare not take any step for fear of consequences.'⁴⁹

Such firmness quietened the viceroy for a time. In his broadcast on 24 August announcing the norms set for the members of the new Interim Government, he said that 'a very momentous step forward has been taken on India's road to freedom'. He also added unequivocally: 'I shall implement fully His Majesty's Government's policy of giving the new

Government the maximum freedom in the day to day administration of the country.⁵⁰ The new Government assumed office on 2 September. Its members were Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, M. Asaf Ali, C. Rajagopalachari, Sarat Chandra Bose, John Mathai, Baldev Singh, Shafaat Ahmed Khan, Jagjivan Ram, Syed Ali Zaheer and Coverji Hormusji Bhabha. It was also stated that two Muslim members would be appointed later.

Technically, the central government in 1946 worked under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. But none disputed that, in its character and formation, it was different from its predecessors. Nehru did not want it to be even referred to as the Governor General's Executive Council. He wanted it to be called the Provisional National Government.⁵¹ But he had no objection to its being called an 'Interim Government' as, by agreement, it came to be called, with its meetings referred to as Cabinet Meetings.

The Congress had included its topmost leaders in this government. They had accepted these positions, explained Gandhiji, 'not at all in the spirit of gaining power for a party but in the spirit of selfless service for the whole nation.'⁵² The secretary of state also expressed satisfaction that the Congress had put in its best men and added that its main figures would 'command respect not only of a very large part of India but of the world'.⁵³ Press reactions were favourable even in Britain. The formation of the new government was very well received even by such right-wing organs as the *Daily Telegraph*.⁵⁴ The Congress leaders looked upon it as a prelude to full independence. Gandhi remarked that 'the door to Purna Swaraj has at last been opened'. Nehru proposed to devote his energies to constructive efforts. In his broadcast to the people on 7 September, Nehru said: 'Too long we have been passive spectators of events, the playthings of others. The initiative comes to our people now and we shall make the history of our choice.'⁵⁵ Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Home Minister, supplemented this by saying that the Interim Government was not an arena for party politics and intrigues but a body to run the government machinery smoothly during the interim period on purely nationalist and democratic lines. Amongst the immediate needs of the country, he mentioned removal of corruption, better communications, provision of food, clothing and health for the millions, their education and removal of chronic poverty and untouchability.⁵⁶

The British prime minister and the secretary of state stressed the importance of treating the Interim Government as liberally as possible. When the viceroy expressed his apprehension that the actions of the new government might frequently infringe his 'sense of fairness and justice',⁵⁷ Prime Minister Attlee advised that he should be ready for the eventuality of having to give his assent to measures which did not

entirely commend themselves to him.⁵⁸ Welcoming the use of the word 'Cabinet' in the viceroy's letter and his statement to the press that he was no longer maintaining direct and regular touch with the secretaries of the departments, the secretary of state commented that it was best to make liberal concessions in matters of nomenclature and procedure, adding: 'I will certainly do my best at this end to co-operate by endeavouring to treat and to get my colleagues to treat, the Interim Government as a Dominion Government to the greatest possible extent.'⁵⁹

The Congress nominees of the Interim Government decided to carry on the administration on the principle of joint responsibility and, until the Muslim League members joined, the non-Congress members also accepted this position. As a result, the newly formed Government began to work as a team. They held informal meetings daily at which all important questions were brought up and lines of action decided upon. Then, only those questions came up at the official cabinet meetings. In spite of this, as the viceroy confessed to the king, there was no attempt to treat his cabinet meetings as purely formal and that there was often quite lively discussion at these meetings and the decisions taken had been sensible. 'The two most talkative members', said the viceroy, were Rajagopalachari and Asaf Ali. The cabinet meetings 'passed off smoothly and in a friendly atmosphere' he added in his letter of 22 October 1946.⁶⁰ Things, however, changed after the Muslim League joined on 25 October 1946.

On the whole, it becomes clear from a study of various issues that came up during this period that the viceroy and other senior British officials found it very difficult to repose complete trust in the Congress ministry. In the struggle for independence Congress and the officials had been in opposite camps. They found in the League their natural ally because the League also acted on anti-Congress lines. As soon as the prospect of formation of an Interim Government emerged, concern was expressed about the possibility of 'roving inquiries' by the Congress into the conduct of government servants at the time of the Quit India Movement and at a meeting of governors of the UP, CP and Berar with the viceroy at Simla, it was pointed out that such an inquiry would have a most devastating effect on the morale of the services.⁶¹ No doubt, there was constant pressure on the Congress leaders to do so, but they decided against holding any general inquiry.⁶² The officials also apprehended that even in office the Congress might officially sponsor a mass movement. These assumptions left a decisive imprint on the attitude of British officials towards Congress governments both at the centre and in the provinces. The Congress leaders made every attempt to conduct their work with moderation and a sense of responsibility and even the secretary of state and the viceroy could not fail to notice this.⁶³

The new government had been sworn in under the shadow of most destructive and savage communal disturbances in Calcutta. The British in India were still responsible for maintaining law and order. But instead of going all out to suppress these riots, they began to express misgivings about taking stern measures, lest Congress got the credit for this achievement. In a meeting of the executive council held on 4 August, where the question of bringing Congress in at the centre was only under consideration and not even decided, the Finance Member, Sir Eric Coates, said:

If Congress forms a Government and there is political trouble in the country, we must make up our mind now if we should be prepared to face all that would be involved in suppressing it. In other words, if there was trouble we should be compelled to hold the ring, unless we were prepared to walk out handing over the Government to the Congress.⁶⁴

In these circumstances, it became very difficult for the Interim Government to deal effectively with widespread lawlessness.

Wavell distrusted this new government, partly because Congress held a predominant position to the exclusion of the League, and partly because he shuddered at the prospect of sharing power and responsibilities with this new government. Barely a week after the Interim Government assumed office, Wavell was complaining:

I am afraid the Congress policy is to consolidate itself in power, to use British assistance in putting down riots from day to day, and perhaps if necessary, to buy all the Muslims at a lower price when we finally go. I am quite clear that we must not allow the Congress virtually to monopolise power under the protection of the British regime, and we must continue our efforts to get a coalition.⁶⁵

Later, he complained to King George VI also that Nehru and the Congress were 'in fact, continuously at work to undermine my position and try to restrict my powers by every insidious means that their subtle legalistic minds can contrive. I have to try and keep a straight bat to an almost daily succession of googlies or fast ones.'⁶⁶

This attitude led to friction between the viceroy and the Interim Government. To begin with, two members of the Interim Government, Sir Shafat Ahmed Khan and Rajagopalachari, had not been able to take charge of their portfolios. The viceroy tried to argue that these portfolios should either remain vacant or revert to the governor general. But Nehru protested forcefully:

I do not quite understand a portfolio remaining vacant or reverting to the Governor-General because a Member happens to be absent for a

while. . . . The whole cabinet is jointly responsible for major decisions. . . . If a Member is absent for a while . . . the portfolio should either be handled by some other member or by me as Vice-President. . . . I do feel that the approach to this problem should be in line with the conception of a growth of popular Government under responsible Ministers.⁶⁷

Similarly, on the day the Interim Government was formed the viceroy issued a directive to the effect that the members of the government who might be visiting an Indian state should give previous information of the visit to the Political Department and should avoid making speeches of a political nature. But Nehru was not ready to submit to such restrictions. 'I do not quite understand why we should function in a state under the tutelage of the Political Department. . . . It will be more fitting if the Political Department brought itself in line with the present Interim Government',⁶⁸ insisted Nehru.

No wonder, Wavell commented 'I like Nehru as a man, though I distrust his political aims and his judgement.'⁶⁹

Not just at the centre, but in the provinces too, it was necessary for governors and ministries to establish a new working relationship. But this did not always come easily and relations often became strained. During the disturbances in Bihar, the governor complained that his authority had been undermined because of encouragement from the new ministry.⁷⁰ In the United Provinces, the question of recruitment of men of the Indian National Army to the police force became an issue between the governor and the ministry led by Govind Ballabh Pant. Nehru in this case advised Pant not to press the proposal.⁷¹ In the case of Sind, Nehru alleged that the governor was using his powers to bolster an ineffectual Muslim League Ministry. On this issue, the viceroy argued that matters relating to provincial subjects were dealt with by the governor general in his individual capacity. But Nehru insisted that, in view of the changes in the government, the old legal position regarding the governor 'necessarily undergoes some change by convention and practice'. In order to avoid conflicting policies being followed, it was necessary that even in matters under the governor general's discretion there should be informal consultation.⁷²

During his visit to the North West Frontier Province as External Affairs Minister in October, Nehru had bitter experience of the mischief the animosity of officials could cause. In this province, though 97 per cent of the population was Muslim, Nationalist Muslims had won a clear majority and a Congress ministry was formed. The Muslim League was keen to reverse this situation, because otherwise it could not claim to represent all Muslims. The League sent the Mulla of Manki into tribal territory to organize demonstrations against Nehru. Such activities directed against the vice-president of the viceroy's council should have

been curbed by the government. But the mulla was not restrained. Sir Olaf Caroe gave a most curious explanation for his conduct: 'I think that in the circumstances, and given the fact that Nehru's tour was obviously intended to push the Congress course, it would have been wrong to put active restraint against the League propagandists going into tribal territory, and an attempt to do so would certainly have led to disturbances.'⁷³ The result was that, throughout his tour, Jawaharlal faced hostile demonstrations and stone throwing. Nehru completed his programme with courage. He later complained that all the trouble happened at visits which were officially arranged. However, far from being cowed, Nehru became all the more insistent that he must keep the External Affairs portfolio himself.⁷⁴

Thus, though the political atmosphere was apparently placid, undercurrents of friction between the Congress and the bureaucracy often broke through to the surface. Within weeks of assuming office, an indignant Nehru, thanking Cripps for his good wishes on assuming office, volleyed indignantly:

I am afraid the future is not a rosy one. I am not referring so much to the inherent difficulties of the situation but rather to the efforts being made to hamper the work of the Interim Government. . . . As a matter of fact, within a few days of our taking office, fresh attempts were made, without our concurrence, to reopen old issues and to go back to where we were some months ago. This is very unsettling both for us and the public. The Interim Government can either function as a Government or not at all. There is no middle position.⁷⁵

In inviting the Congress to form an Interim Government, Wavell had no intention of dropping the Muslim parcel. He was all along conscious that his offer to the Congress was not a tombstone on his efforts to bring in the Muslim League, but only a stepping stone in that direction. 'I was determined to secure a coalition as soon as possible', he told King George VI. In fact, Wavell was for ever looking for some traces of a desire to compromise in Jinnah's statements.⁷⁶ The Congress had, from the first, taken the stand that a coalition of the Congress and the League would best serve the interests of the country. In fact in the parleys between Wavell and Nehru on the personnel of the Interim Government, the possibility of the League joining in was always considered. Two seats had been left vacant in the hope of the Muslim League joining in later. While forwarding his allocation of offices in the new government too, Nehru noted that, should the League later decide to come in, Congress nominees would withdraw.⁷⁷ Congress leaders also realized that it was not possible to frame an acceptable constitution without the co-operation of the Muslim League. Congress wanted to frame a constitution with ample safeguard for the Muslim community.⁷⁸

In his broadcast on 24 August on the occasion of assumption of office by the Interim Government, the viceroy reiterated that the invitation to enter the Interim Government was still open for the Muslim League, which could still propose five names in a government of fourteen. Appealing to the Muslim League to reconsider its decision not to take part in the Constituent Assembly; which promised to give them so wide a field for protecting the interests of the Muslims, he gave the assurance that the procedure laid down in the statement of 16 May regarding the framing of provincial and group constitutions would be faithfully adhered to and that the Congress was ready to agree that any dispute on interpretation might be referred to the Federal Court.⁷⁹ Soon after this broadcast, the viceroy left for Calcutta to acquaint himself at first hand with the tragic happenings there. To him, the Calcutta tragedy underlined that there would be nothing but chaos in India unless the two parties reached a settlement at the Centre and that one-party government, 'even though it is as representative of a large majority as the Congress Interim Government', could not hold the country steadily together during the transition period.⁸⁰

On the question of appointing a Muslim to the Interim Government out of the Congress quota, even the viceroy was convinced that the Congress would not give way. He tried to bring the leaders of the League round to accept this demand of the Congress. In an interview with Suhrawardy during his Calcutta visit he tried to convince him 'that a Nationalist Muslim in place of a Hindu should be a source of strength to Jinnah rather than otherwise, since on matters of really vital importance to the Muslims, such as the safety of their religion and interests generally, Nationalist Muslims like Azad and Zakir Hussain would be a source of strength rather than otherwise'.⁸¹ On the question of grouping of provinces, he was determined to make one more effort to cajole the Congress leaders. He called Gandhi and Nehru for an interview on 27 August 1946 and in a tone that Gandhi described as 'minatory', he asked them to make the following statement, the text of which he placed before them:

The Congress are prepared in the interests of communal harmony to accept the intention of the statement of May 16th that Provinces cannot exercise any option affecting their membership of the Section or of the Groups if formed until the decision contemplated in paragraph 19 (VIII) of the statement of the 16th May is taken by the new Legislative Assembly after the new constitutional arrangements have come into operation and the first general elections have been held.⁸²

During the conversation, the viceroy not only threatened not to summon the Constituent Assembly until the point was settled but also

hinted that he might not appoint the Interim Government which he had already announced and carry on with the caretaker government. As to the suggestion of referring only disputed points to the Supreme Court, the viceroy asserted that the problem was not a legal but a practical one. When Gandhi tried to argue with the viceroy, the viceroy reportedly told him: 'I was [am] a plain man and not a lawyer, and that I know perfectly well what the Mission meant, and that the compulsory grouping was the whole crux of the plan.'⁸³

The viceroy had asked Nehru to place the formula before the members of the Working Committee which he did the very next day. They were considerably surprised that this proposal should have been made at a time when they were on the eve of the formation of the Interim Government. The viceroy's reference to the non-summoning of the Constituent Assembly was also viewed with resentment. The members felt that the government was under both a legal and a moral obligation to go on with the Constituent Assembly.⁸⁴ They were also perturbed about its implications for the functioning of the Interim Government. 'No Government can function if it is treated as if responsibility lay elsewhere, that it had to submit in vital matters to proposals with which it was in disagreement', remonstrated Nehru.⁸⁵

The interview with the viceroy set Gandhi also thinking. He wrote to the viceroy the next day, 'as a friend':

We are all plain men though we may not all be soldiers and even though some of us may know the law. It is our purpose, I take it, to devise methods to prevent a repetition of the recent terrible happenings in Calcutta. The question before us is how best to do it.

Your language last evening was minatory. As representative of the King, you cannot afford to be a military man only, nor to ignore the law, much less the law of your own making. You should be assisted, if necessary, by a legal mind enjoying your full confidence. You threatened not to convene the Constituent Assembly if the formula you placed before Pandit Nehru and me was not acted upon by the Congress. If such be really the case, then you should not have made the announcement you did on 12th August. But having made it you should recall the action and form another ministry enjoying your full confidence. If British arms are kept here for internal peace and order, your Interim Government would be reduced to a farce. The Congress cannot afford to impose its will on warring elements in India through the use of British arms.⁸⁶

The viceroy, at Gandhi's request, sent the text of his letter to the secretary of state and, in a covering letter, gave vent to his feelings. To him Congress refusal to change its stand on the grouping issue seemed to be 'convincing evidence that Congress always meant to use their position in the Interim Government to break up the Muslim League and

in the Constituent Assembly to destroy the Grouping scheme which was the one effective safeguard for the Muslims.' If Congress intentions were as Gandhi's letter suggested, the result of Congress being in power, the viceroy predicted, 'can only be a state of virtual civil war in many parts of India'.⁸⁷

The British Government reacted very differently. While agreeing that determined effort must be made to bring about some agreement between the Congress and the Muslim League, the secretary of state, in consultation with the British prime minister, cautioned the viceroy not to take any steps which were likely to result in a breach between the Government and the Congress 'as the consequences of such a breach would be very grave'. The viceroy was also told in no uncertain terms that if he had consulted them before meeting Gandhi and Nehru on 27 August, he would have been advised to avoid saying that the Constituent Assembly would not be convened. The viceroy was asked to avoid pressing the groupings question before the Interim Government took over and had a period of office in order that the effect of responsibility might make its full impression on the members. The secretary of state did not even share the view that Gandhi's letter proved that the Congress meant to use its position in the Interim Government to break the Muslim League and in the Constituent Assembly to destroy the grouping scheme.⁸⁸ Later, in a meeting at 10 Downing Street, which was attended by the Prime Minister, members of the Cabinet Mission and officials of the India Office, a general agreement emerged that, contrary to the view which the viceroy had been expressing, the Constituent Assembly should be allowed to go ahead even without the participation of the Muslim League.⁸⁹ The secretary of state also informed the viceroy that, in this meeting, 'considerable objections' were seen to viceroy's suggestions that, if necessary, in order to satisfy Jinnah, HMG should announce that the sections were to decide their own procedure.⁹⁰

4. Entry of the Muslim League into the Interim Government

With the formation of the Interim Government under the leadership of the Congress, the question of the attitude of the Muslim League towards the Cabinet Mission plan acquired a different complexion. The viceroy, however, continued to do his 'utmost to secure a fair deal for the Muslims'.⁹¹ He arranged a meeting with Jinnah for this purpose on 16 September and found him 'much more tractable than before and easier in discussion'.⁹² From this point on, Wavell conducted negotiations with the Congress on behalf of the Muslim League.

In one of the interviews Wavell asked Gandhi what should be done if the worst happened and the Muslim League did not come in. Gandhi

said that though the Constituent Assembly should be dropped, the Interim Government should go on, the vacant seats being filled by other prominent Muslims. The viceroy reacted very sharply to this suggestion and reported to the secretary of state: 'This of course has been Gandhi's objective and the objective of the majority of the Congress. I think from the first, i.e. to establish themselves at the Centre and to suppress, cajole or buy over the Muslims, and then impose a constitution at their leisure.'⁹³ In this very interview, Wavell made one more attempt to broach the issue of the appointment of a Nationalist Muslim in the Congress quota. In this interview of 16 September, he had told Jinnah unequivocally that he 'could not possibly support him' over this issue. But once again he suggested to Gandhi that it would be an act of high statesmanship if Congress waived the right for the sake of peace. But for Congress it was not a question of waiving a right. Gandhi put it succinctly: 'one may waive a right, one cannot waive a duty'.⁹⁴

Congress leaders resented these pressure tactics of the viceroy. At the same time, they realized the advantages of bringing in the League also and therefore responded favourably to attempts to bring about a settlement. During the early days of October, negotiations were carried on between Gandhi and Jinnah through the Nawab of Bhopal who had enjoyed cordial relations with both.⁹⁵ Through his mediation a formula was worked out which, as it turned out, Gandhi signed without reading closely.⁹⁶ It ran as follows:

The Congress does not challenge and accepts that the Muslim League now is the authoritative representative of an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India. As such and in accordance with democratic principles, they alone have today an unquestionable right to represent the Muslims of India. But the Congress cannot agree that any restriction or limitation should be put upon the Congress to choose such representatives as they think proper from amongst the members of the Congress as their representatives.

II. It is understood that all the Ministers of the Interim Government will work as a team for the good of the whole of India and will never involve the intervention of the Governor-General in any case.⁹⁷

The Congress leaders were not inclined to accept the first part of the formula because they felt that it represented a dramatic departure from their long-held position. In fact Gandhi himself always unequivocally stood for the national character of the Congress and he could not have accepted the statement if he had read it closely. In a letter to Jinnah, Nehru suggested a modification by inserting the proviso: 'For identical reasons, the League recognizes the Congress as the authoritative organisation representing all such non-Muslims as have thrown in their lot with the Congress.'⁹⁸ This was not accepted by Jinnah who had been

questioning the right of the Congress to nominate a Muslim from its own quota. Ultimately, for the sake of agreement with the League, Nehru expressed his willingness to accept the statement if Jinnah accepted the entire formula, including the second part.⁹⁹ Jinnah however, declined to accept the second part. Nothing came of this episode.

In the meanwhile, Jinnah had put forward his nine-point formula as the basis of the League's joining the Interim Government. On 4 October Wavell handed over a copy of this letter to Nehru with his own comments. The viceroy accepted the Muslim League's demand that the total number of the members of the Interim Government should not exceed 14, that the major portfolios should be equally distributed between the Congress and the League and that the proposed arrangements should not be changed or modified without the consent of both the major parties. The League also desired and the viceroy accepted that the ultimate responsibility for nominating the sixth nominee of the Congress representing the Scheduled Castes would be the viceroy's. Jinnah had put forward a demand for the rotation of the vice-president's post. On this point, the viceroy said that, in view of the practical difficulties involved, he would 'arrange to nominate a Muslim League member to preside over the Cabinet in the event of the Governor-General and the Vice-President being absent.' Jinnah also demanded the right to be consulted in the selection of minority representatives and the right to veto in regard to decisions on all major communal issues. On these points the viceroy expressed the opinion that a coalition government 'works by a process of mutual adjustment or does not work at all' and that such differences would be resolved by friendly discussions. Jinnah further wanted that the question of the settlement of the long-term plan should stand over 'until a better and more conducive atmosphere' had been created. But Wavell rejected this suggestion outright, pointing out that, 'Since the basis for participation in the cabinet is, of course, the acceptance of the statement of 16 May, I assume that that a League Council will meet at a very early date to reconsider its Bombay resolution.' Nor did the viceroy accept the demand that the Congress should not include 'in the remaining five members of their quota a Muslim of their choice'.¹⁰⁰

Nehru replied on the same day. The main thrust of his arguments was that if they functioned as a cabinet, the whole cabinet should be consulted before any decision was arrived at and that any procedure which encouraged grouping within the cabinet would seriously militate against the whole conception of cabinet government.¹⁰¹

The Congress wanted the Muslim League to join with the aim of co-operating in the Interim Government as well as in the Constituent Assembly. Jinnah, therefore, decided to join with the blessings of the

viceroy and without any agreement with the Congress. The Muslim League sprang a surprise by including a Scheduled Caste nominee — Jogendranath Mandal from Bengal — in its own quota. His nomination was frankly intended by the League as a tit for the Congress tat of a Nationalist Muslim. Moreover, Congress had refused to accord to the Muslim League 'an unquestionable right to represent Muslims of India'. Jinnah perhaps wanted to take his revenge by claiming to represent even non-Muslims. But any such step could erode the ground on which the League stood. Gandhi, who had championed the cause of the depressed classes for decades did not welcome this decision. The League was frankly a Muslim communal organization and such a step on its part made Gandhi wonder whether the League's joining the Interim Government would prove to be a good augury.¹⁰² The viceroy surmised that it was a calculated move: 'I am pretty certain that the Muslim League are looking to their future in group C, and trying to lay the foundations of an alliance with the Scheduled Caste in this way,'¹⁰³ he wrote.

On 15 October, a press communique was issued announcing that the Muslim League had decided to join the Interim Government; that in order to make it possible to reform the cabinet, three members had resigned and that five nominees of the Muslim League had been appointed to the Interim Government. They were: Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Jogendranath Mandal. Mandal belonged to the Scheduled Castes and was a minister in the Muslim League ministry in Bengal. The three members who resigned were Sarat Chandra Bose, Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer.

Jinnah chose not to come in himself and this became a subject of comment. He said that he wanted to remain outside to organize his party. But it was widely believed that Jinnah had been swayed by the motives of personal prestige, because he feared that inside the cabinet he would be considered as a subordinate of Nehru.¹⁰⁴ Congress leaders were not happy about the choice of names the Muslim League had made.¹⁰⁵ However, in Jinnah's opinion, '... the Congress leaders [in the Interim Government] were completely over-rated; had simply reached the position they had because they had been to jail and were, therefore, martyrs; that the personnel of the Muslim League were really superior in capacity etc.'¹⁰⁶

In the matter of distribution of portfolios, the viceroy's view was that one of the three portfolios of External Affairs, Home or Defence should be made available to the Muslim League. But Nehru was strongly opposed to any change. To hand over Defence or Home to the Muslim League would, he stressed, give rise to serious misgivings. After his

experiences in the NWFP he was averse to giving up even the External Affairs portfolio. The viceroy was particularly keen to see that the Home portfolio be transferred to the League. He capitulated only when Nehru threatened to resign.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, it was decided to allot to the Muslim League representatives the five portfolios of Finance, Commerce, Communications, Health and Law. The Interim Government was reconstituted on 26 October 1946 and the portfolios were assigned as follows:

Jawaharlal Nehru	: External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations
Vallabhbhai Patel	: Home, Information and Broadcasting
Baldev Singh	: Defence
John Mathai	: Industries and Supplies
C. Rajagopalachari	: Education
C.H. Bhabha	: Works, Mines and Power
Rajendra Prasad	: Food and Agriculture
M. Asaf Ali	: Railways
Jagjivan Ram	: Labour
Liaquat Ali Khan	: Finance
I.I. Chundrigar	: Commerce
Abdur Rab Nishtar	: Communications
Ghazanfar Ali Khan	: Health
Jogendranath Mandal	: Law

Jinnah succeeded in putting the League into the Interim Government without any commitment to join the Constituent Assembly and without recognizing Nehru's leadership. The Congress members continued to press the viceroy for a clear statement from the Muslim League accepting the long-term plan of the Cabinet Mission. The viceroy passed on to them what is described as 'an unsigned cheque on behalf of the League' — which was later dishonoured by the League. On 23 October Wavell wrote to Nehru:

I have made it clear to Mr Jinnah, whom I have seen today, that the Muslim League's entry into the Interim Government is conditional on the acceptance of the scheme of the Cabinet Delegation . . . and that he must call his council at an early date to agree to this.

As I told you, Mr Jinnah has assured me that the Muslim League will come into the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly with the intention of co-operating. He regrets and condemns as deeply as you do the recent disturbances in East Bengal.¹⁰⁸

But Nehru remained unconvinced. He wrote back: 'While you have made this clear to Mr Jinnah, it is not equally clear what the Muslim League's view is on the subject.'¹⁰⁹ Even the secretary of state conceded that the Congress was 'probably justified' in thinking that the

League was not coming in in a fully co-operative spirit.¹¹⁰ Gandhi too had written that it would be 'worse than useless' if the Congress and the Muslim League came together only with a view to fight each other.¹¹¹

It is unfortunate that the Congress leaders did not threaten to resign on the issue of the Muslim League joining without withdrawing the resolutions of 29 July. The viceroy was fully aware of the potential strength of the Congress and the ominous consequences of resignation of Congress from the government. During the last week of November, the viceroy toyed with the idea of forcing the Congress to accept the League interpretation of the Cabinet Mission plan. But he confessed that Congress might react by tendering the resignation of their members at the centre and in the provinces, followed possibly by widespread violence. This could not be met in any way other than withdrawing from India.¹¹² This being his opinion, the viceroy would not have taken the threat of resignation lightly.

Four days before the League formally entered the Interim Government, Wavell confessed to King George VI that he was 'frankly sceptical about their finding the necessary good will and spirit of compromise to hold them together'.¹¹³ But he hoped that the more they got busy together on brass tacks, the better it would be and that, by actually coming to grips with the problems of administration and training, the various members would gradually learn to trust each other and get along as a team. He also thought that Jinnah's non-inclusion would facilitate this development.¹¹⁴ He was elated when Patel and Liaquat Ali came to see him together or when Nehru, Patel, Liaquat and Nishtar went on a tour of Bengal and Bihar together. He continued to report that cabinet meetings passed off amiably.¹¹⁵

This appearance of co-operation was deceptive. The Muslim League had entered with the prime object of preventing the Congress from consolidating its position to the detriment of League's interests. Jinnah denied that the Interim Government was either a cabinet or a coalition. He described it as an Executive Council formed under the Act of 1919. He said that a coalition could be formed only when there was a sovereign parliament composed of two or more political parties. He also said that though even in official correspondence the Interim Government was referred to as 'Cabinet', it was not a cabinet, and added, 'Little things please little minds, and you cannot turn a donkey into an elephant by calling it an elephant.' He looked upon the members of the Muslim League in the government as 'sentinels' who would watch Muslim interests in the day to day administration of government. In another statement to the press, Jinnah said: 'Pandit Nehru and the Congress expect the Muslim League nominees to act according to their orders as a subservient body. This is an impossible position for

us to accept. We cannot take orders either from Nehru or from the Congress . . . as long as the policy of the Congress is to torpedo the demand for Pakistan'.¹¹⁶ Liaquat Ali Khan, a League minister in the Interim Government and General Secretary of the Muslim League, put it unequivocally: 'We are going into the Interim Government to get a foothold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan.'¹¹⁷

Given this attitude of the League, it was futile to expect that its members would act in a spirit of co-operation. It was reported that in the sessions of the Legislative Assembly, Nehru and Liaquat Ali sat side by side throughout the session in glum and unfriendly silence, scarcely a word and never a smile was exchanged between them.¹¹⁸ Nehru accused the viceroy of 'removing the wheels of the Cabinet coach one by one'. He retorted angrily when the viceroy advised Nehru to consult Liaquat Ali Khan regarding Krishna Menon's tour of European countries. He wrote:

I have told you previously that I find it difficult to function in Government when some members of Government are not even agreeable to normal consultations and insist on keeping themselves apart as a block . . . It now appears not only that the Muslim League members are going to function as a separate block but that you wish to encourage them to do so. If any matter arises it is referred to Mr Liaquat Ali Khan and me as if we represent two different blocks. And now you ask me to consult Mr Liaquat Ali Khan in a matter which concerns my Department and has absolutely nothing to do with him except in so far as he is one of the Members of Government. I am unable to accept this procedure.¹¹⁹

Apart from distrust of each other's intentions, the announcement of the new government coincided with a serious outbreak of communal disturbances in Eastern Bengal which exacerbated bitterness between the two parties still further. In his private interviews, Liaquat Ali let it be known that the League leaders could not afford to let the communal feelings in the country die down. The League leaders wanted the sort of atmosphere in which violence might break out any moment because they regarded this communal feeling 'as a proof of their care for Pakistan.'¹²⁰

5. The Constituent Assembly Meets

By the end of July 1946, elections were completed for seats assigned to the British Indian provinces. The Congress won all the general seats except nine. The Muslim League won 73 seats, i.e. all but five of the seats allotted to Muslims. The method of filling the 93 seats allotted to the Indian States in the Constituent Assembly was a matter for negotiation between the parties concerned. The position of various parties in the Constituent Assembly was as follows:

Parties in the Indian Constituent Assembly¹²¹

Section A:	Madras, Bombay, Orissa, U.P., C.P., Bihar, Coorg, Delhi, Ajmer, Marwara, Congress	164 (162 General, 2 Muslims)
	Muslim League	19
	Independents	7
Section B:	Punjab, NWFP, Sind, Baluchistan Congress	9
	Muslim League	19
	Unionist Party	3
	Independent	1
	Sikh seats	4 (vacant)
Section C:	Bengal, Assam Congress	32
	Muslim League	35
	Communist	1
	Scheduled Caste Federation	1
	Krishak Praja Party	1
Totals:	Congress	201
	Muslim League	73
	Independents	8
	Unionist Party	3
	Scheduled Caste Federation	1
	Krishak Praja Party	1
	Sikhs	4 (vacant)
Grand		
Total:		296

The reason for Sikh seats remaining vacant calls for comment. The complaint of the Sikhs was that in spite of recognizing the weight of Sikh fears against Muslim-majority domination, the Cabinet Mission had imposed a group system which would have had the effect of subjecting the Sikhs to perpetual Muslim communal rule.¹²² The Sikhs had withdrawn their nominations before the elections and, consequently, no Sikh was elected to the Constituent Assembly. The Congress Working Committee at Wardha in August took up the Sikh question in a sympathetic spirit and passed a resolution extending all possible support to the Sikhs in removing their legitimate grievances and in securing

adequate safeguards for the protection of their just interests in the Punjab. On 14 August, the Panthic Board of the Sikhs met and passed a resolution stating that the Sikhs should give the Constituent Assembly 'a fair trial'. The Reforms Commissioner advised that this might be taken as acceptance of the statement of 16 May. But the viceroy insisted on obtaining a specific confirmation of the board's acceptance of this statement which was given on 22 August. The way was thus clear for the Sikhs to join the Interim Government, though permission to hold elections was given much later.¹²³

The Muslim League entered the Interim Government on the basis of acceptance of the statement of 16 May and the viceroy 'assumed' that the League leaders would summon their council at an early date to reconsider their resolution of 29 July in which they rejected the long-term plan.¹²⁴ In the case of the Sikhs, the viceroy had insisted upon 'the definite resolution of acceptance' and had not considered the resolution of August 14 of the Panthic Board to be sufficient. No such commitment was insisted upon in case of the Muslim League. Jinnah continued to evade the issue of rescinding the League Council resolution of 29 July. 'I am rather puzzled and worried' confessed the viceroy as early as on 4 November.¹²⁵ In his meeting with Jinnah on 30 October, the viceroy had asked him to spell out precisely 'the assurances required before Jinnah summoned his League council'. Jinnah did not give any reply to this until 17 November. Instead, at a press conference on 14 November, he asserted that 'absolute Pakistan' was 'the only solution.'¹²⁶

In the meanwhile, after several postponements, the viceroy agreed to hold the first session of the Constituent Assembly on 9 December. Nehru had been pressing him to issue invitations to members of the Constituent Assembly before the Congress Working Committee meeting on 19 November. The cabinet in Britain too had expressed itself in favour of summoning the assembly without further postponement.¹²⁷ Invitations were issued on 20 November. In a meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Congress on 21 November on the eve of the Meerut Session, Nehru said that the viceroy had failed to carry on the government in the spirit in which it had started. He also said that the British officials had an inbuilt bias in favour of the League. He attributed the disharmony between the Congress and the League 'to the permanent British officials who being traditionally anti-Congress found in the League their natural champion because the League too acted on anti-Congress lines.'¹²⁸ Nehru also brushed aside Jinnah's argument that, in view of communal outbreaks in Bihar, priority should first be given to protection of life and property and the meeting of the Constituent Assembly postponed *sine die*. He argued that postponement of the Constituent Assembly would only give an opportunity to mischief mak-

ers to create more trouble and thus block the path of progress. This was not just Nehru's opinion. In fact, *The Hindustan Times* reported that the manner in which Nehru's statement was received by the delegates showed that 'the entire Congress stands behind the members of the Interim Government.'¹²⁹

The same day, in a statement, Jinnah described the decision to issue invitations for the Constituent Assembly meeting as 'one more blunder of a very grave and serious character', and called upon the representatives of the Muslim League not to attend it. He also alleged that the viceroy's sole purpose was to appease the Congress.¹³⁰ However, during his parleys with Jinnah and Liaquat Ali, Wavell tended to agree with them that the League's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan was conditional upon the assurances from the British Government in respect of sections and groupings.¹³¹

In view of the stalemate in India, the British Government made one more effort to salvage the Cabinet Mission plan by inviting the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League to London for discussions. The viceroy had been recommending such a meeting for giving the League the assurances it sought on the ground that this might still save the Mission's plan whilst 'otherwise H.M.G. must recognise that it has in effect abandoned the plan drawn up by the Mission and has surrendered to Congress'.¹³² Invitations were issued to the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League to send two representatives each to London to discuss the basis of the forthcoming meeting of the Indian Constituent Assembly. A Sikh representative was also invited. First, the Congress and then, consequently, the Sikhs refused to accept the invitation. Jinnah at first accepted the invitation and then threatened to withdraw it. In the negotiations, Prime Minister Attlee intervened more than once, seeking to remove misgivings and giving assurances of affirmative response. Finally, Nehru accepted the invitation on condition that he would have to be back before 9 December so as to be able to participate in the opening session of the Constituent Assembly. Liaquat and Jinnah went to London on behalf of the Muslim League, Baldev Singh on behalf of the Sikhs and Nehru as sole representative of the Congress. Patel expressed his unwillingness to go.¹³³ Wavell accompanied them.

The conference met in London from 3 to 6 December. There was a flurry of discussions, meetings and negotiations.¹³⁴ In the statement issued on 6 December at the end of the discussions, the League's point of view was upheld. It stated:

The Cabinet Mission have throughout maintained the view that the decisions of the Sections should, in the absence of agreement to the contrary, be taken by simple majority vote of representatives in the Sections. This view

has been accepted by the Muslim League, but the Congress have put forward a different view. They have asserted that the true meaning of the statement, read as a whole, is that the provinces have a right to decide both as to grouping and as to their own constitution.¹³⁵

The British Government appealed to the Congress to accept this interpretation. The possibility of reference to the Federal Court in India in future was left open. Nehru did not comment on the statement but merely observed that this elucidation of the statement had created a new situation and that the Congress would require time to consider it.¹³⁶ In a statement in the House of Commons on 15 March 1946, Attlee had said that a minority could not be allowed indefinitely to hold up the wishes of a majority. Many in the Congress therefore regarded the statement of 6 December as a betrayal.

Jinnah's recalcitrance remained the main feature of the situation even after the London conference. He took the view that he would not call the Muslim League Council until the Congress had unequivocally accepted the statement of 6 December. The Congress resolved to continue with the discharge of its responsibilities in the Constituent Assembly which duly met for the first time on 9 December. Some 205 representatives, including nine women, were present.

The proceedings on the opening day were conducted with 'dignity and decorum'. Dr Sachchidananda Sinha, as the oldest member, acted as president. John Colville, the Acting Viceroy, described his speech as 'dignified and impressive'.¹³⁷ Later, Rajendra Prasad was elected President of the Constituent Assembly.¹³⁸ Messages conveying good wishes and congratulations were received from the governments of the USA, China and Australia, and were read out in the assembly. No message was received from the British Government and this became a subject of comment.¹³⁹ John Colville, however, explained that H.M.G. were in a rather different relationship to the assembly from any of those who had sent messages.¹⁴⁰ The absence of the Muslim League was widely regretted. But it is significant that there were no serious demonstrations anywhere against the meeting of the assembly, not even a black flag demonstration outside the assembly chamber.

The proceedings of the Constituent Assembly were definitely affected by the absence of the Muslim League members. The decisions arrived at could not acquire the aura of finality. On the second day, i.e. 10 December 1946, the President of the Congress, Acharya Kripalani, moved a resolution recommending setting up of a committee to frame 'rules of procedure and other matters'. The resolution, as circulated, contained the words that the committee was to report on 'rules of procedure of the Assembly, Sections and Committees'. But in the resolution actually moved, the words 'Sections and Committees' were dropped on the

ground that these were superfluous. But other members refused to accept this plea. They agreed that the omission of these words might be taken advantage of by the recalcitrants of the League if they chose to join the assembly later. Therefore, Suresh Chander Banerjee, a member from Bengal, moved an amendment insisting on including the words 'Sections and Committees' in the motion. He was eloquently supported by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. The liberal leader, Dr Jayakar, however, pressed for the omission of these words on the ground that the Muslim League, 'though not present' was watching the proceedings with 'jealous and suspicious eyes' to discover whether anything was being taken out of their hands. As they were vitally interested in Sections B and C of the Cabinet Mission Plan, they might feel that the Constituent Assembly was taking advantage of their absence and usurping powers. However, ultimately, Banerjee's amendment was accepted.¹⁴¹

The most important and politically significant debate was held on what came to be known as the 'Objectives Resolution' moved by Jawaharlal Nehru. His speech on the occasion was described as 'one of the most memorable speeches it is the privilege of any one to hear'. The resolution ran as follows:

The Constituent Assembly declares its firm and solemn resolve to proclaim India as an Independent sovereign republic and to draw up for her future governance a constitution wherein the territories that now comprise British India, the territories that now form the Indian States, and such other parts of India as are outside British India and the states as well as such other territories as are willing to be constituted into independent sovereign India shall be a union of them . . . wherein all power and authority are derived from the people . . . and wherein adequate safeguards shall be provided for minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and other backward classes.¹⁴²

Nehru's repeated statement that the house must rise above group or party politics was interpreted as a hint that, though the assembly could not surrender on any fundamental matter, the reasonable grievances of the League would be considered sympathetically. During the debate, Dr Jayakar and Dr Ambedkar appealed to the members to proceed cautiously and wait until representatives of the Muslim League and of the Indian States joined the assembly. Outside the house, this suggestion was backed by Sir Sultan Ahmed, constitutional adviser to the Chamber of Princes, and the Dewans of Hyderabad, Travancore, Mysore and Bikaner. Ultimately, this suggestion was accepted and, on 23 December, the last day of the session, Rajendra Prasad announced that a decision would be taken in the January session. The assembly was adjourned till 20 January.¹⁴³

In the meanwhile, the Congress Working Committee was in session at

Delhi to consider the statement of the British Government issued on 6 December. On 22 December, the committee issued a lengthy statement recording its reactions. It criticized the British statement of 6 December for containing additions to and variations from the Cabinet Mission's statement of 16 May on which the whole scheme of the Constituent Assembly was based. On the issue of reference of disputed clauses to the Federal Court, the committee opined that, while the Congress had always been willing to agree to a reference to the Federal Court, any reference to it at a time when none of the other parties were prepared to join the scheme or accept it, and one of them did not even accept its basis, was totally uncalled for. The committee emphasized that it was anxious to avoid anything which might come in the way of the successful working of the Constituent Assembly and was prepared to do anything in its power to seek and obtain the largest measure of co-operation, provided no fundamental principle was violated. In view of the importance and urgency of the issues, it recommended that a meeting of the All India Congress Committee should be convened in early January.¹⁴⁴

The All India Congress Committee met on 5 January 1947. At this meeting, Nehru moved a resolution endorsing the statement of 22 December issued by the Working Committee. Parts of the resolution read as follows:

The AICC realises and appreciates the difficulties placed in the way of some provinces, notably Baluchistan, Assam, the N.W.F.P. and the Sikhs in the Punjab, by the British Cabinet scheme of 16 May, 1946 and more especially by the interpretation put upon it by the British Government in their statement of 6 December, 1946. The Congress cannot be a party to any such compulsion or imposition against the will of the people concerned — a principle which the British Government have themselves recognised.

The AICC is anxious that the Constituent Assembly should proceed with the work of framing a constitution for free India with the goodwill of all the parties concerned, and, with a view to removing the difficulties that have arisen owing to varying interpretations, agree to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government in regard to the procedure to be followed in sections. It must be clearly understood, however, that this must not involve any compulsion of a province, and that the rights of Sikhs in the Punjab should not be jeopardised. In the event of any attempt at such compulsion, the province or part of a province has a right to take such action as may be deemed necessary in order to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned.¹⁴⁵

The Congress leaders had looked upon this readiness to advise action in accordance with the interpretation of the British Government as definitely 'a climb down'. But they were very keen to bring in the

Muslim League somehow. Talking to the Bengal members, who wanted to know why Assam should be let down 'unceremoniously' when Pandit Nehru gave that province high hopes, Patel explained that 'for the good of the people of India, principles have sometimes to be swallowed for the sake of expediency'. He also said:

The Constituent Assembly cannot function when one of its effective units is not there. It is therefore incumbent that the Muslim League members must be brought in and with their help a constitution should be framed. Refusal to accept the December 6 statement would lead to a state of war with the British Government and the Congress is not ready for that. Any fight with the British Government must nowadays lead to a fight with the Muslims and this must be avoided at any cost.¹⁴⁶

There was a stormy debate on this resolution. Among the opponents were the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party, representatives from Assam and even some right-wing Congressmen. Jayaprakash Narayan was a member of the Working Committee. Still 'as a special case', he was allowed to speak in opposition to the motion. His opinion was that it was a mistake on the part of the Congress to have entered the Interim Government and that the Congress would commit another mistake by passing this resolution. He urged that, instead of negotiating with the British Government, the party should mobilize the new strength which the country had achieved.¹⁴⁷ This resolution was passed after a heated debate lasting two days. Even the viceroy reported that it was no easy business for the old guard of the Congress to get their way about this and they had in fact made the issue of passing this resolution almost a vote of confidence in themselves.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the resolution was passed by a majority.

After this meeting, public interest centred on the reactions of the League. In conversation, Jinnah gave the definite impression that 'the passing of the Congress resolution had not influenced him in the slightest degree'.¹⁴⁹ The views expressed by pro-League journals and leaders also indicated that they were not satisfied with the stand taken by the Congress. Jinnah also announced that the Muslim League Council would be summoned on 29 January. This caused dismay because it became apparent that the League had no intention of participating in the work of the Constituent Assembly which was due to meet on 20 January.

The Constituent Assembly met as scheduled and the debate on the Objectives Resolution was resumed. M.R. Jayakar withdrew his amendment because his sole object was to make it easier for the Muslim League to come in. Since the Muslim League had not shown any inclination to join the Constituent Assembly, there was no point delaying substantive

deliberations further. In an impassioned reply to the debate, Jawaharlal Nehru said that they had waited long enough and that there had been 'plenty of opportunity for those who wanted to come, to come. Unfortunately, they had not yet decided to come and they still hover in this state of indecision'.¹⁵⁰ The Objectives Resolution was carried unanimously.

During this session, some committees were also appointed, like the Steering Committee and Advisory Committees on minorities, tribal area, and fundamental rights. A number of places were left vacant on these committees. It was provided that they could be filled by nomination by the president, the intention being to reserve them for the Muslim League. Controversial measures, like a proposal for redistribution of provincial areas on a linguistic basis, were dropped.

The Working Committee of the All India Muslim League met at Karachi and passed a resolution in which the AICC resolution of 6 January was characterized as 'no more than a dishonest trick and jugglery of words by which Congress has again attempted to deceive the British Government, the Muslim League and public opinion in general'. The League called upon HMG to declare that the constitutional plan formulated by the Cabinet Mission had failed because the Congress had not accepted the statement of 16 May and recommended that 'the Constituent Assembly should be dissolved forthwith'.¹⁵¹ This decision of the League caused disappointment because a Constituent Assembly without the Muslim League, and with participation of representatives from States still uncertain, could not make an acceptable constitution for India as a whole. The viceroy did not think in terms of dissolving the Constituent Assembly and thought of asking the members of the Muslim League to resign from the Interim Government.¹⁵²

Nehru wanted to draw up a model outline constitution for a province and then send it round to provinces for discussion by the provincial assemblies. Nehru also hinted that the question of the League's continuing in the Interim Government was also linked up with the announced policy of the League because 'until the Bombay Resolution was withdrawn, they were committed to a policy of direct action, i.e. of active opposition to the Government of which they at present formed part'.¹⁵³ In the meanwhile, the States Negotiating Committee set up under para 21 of Cabinet Mission's statement of 16 May was due to meet on 8 February and its meetings too remained incomplete because of the absence of the League members.¹⁵⁴

In the meanwhile, the Interim Government continued to function 'rather precariously' and, in view of Muslim League's refusal to accept the Cabinet Mission plan, Nehru and other non-League members of the Interim Government wrote to the viceroy that the members of the Muslim League could not continue to be in the Interim Government.¹⁵⁵

Two days later, Vallabhbhai Patel made it clear in a press interview that the Congress would withdraw from the Interim Government if the representatives of the Muslim League were allowed to remain in it. 'The League must either get out of the Interim Government or change its Karachi Resolution', he said. The secretary of state advised the viceroy to play for time. Attlee confessed that, in view of this letter from Nehru, it had become imperative for the British cabinet to take some definite action, because otherwise the choice was between acceding to the request to remove Muslim League members from the Interim Government and facing the resignation of Congress and other members. Either of these, he felt, would produce a dangerous situation.¹⁵⁶ To ask for the resignation of the League representatives from the Interim Government would have had serious repercussions in India and in the Muslim countries of the world. To allow the Congress to resign would have meant resignation of Congress ministries in the provinces as well, and facing the consequences of an open breach with the Congress at a time when, in the case of any mass movement it was doubtful whether the loyalty of the army and the services could be relied upon.¹⁵⁷

6. Gandhi's Mission for Communal Peace

Commenting on the communal riots in Calcutta during the third week of August 1946, a British-edited and controlled paper, *The Statesman* of Calcutta, accused the League Ministry in power in Bengal of contributing 'undeniably' to horrible events 'by confused acts of omission and provocation'. Reporting on a discussion with Liaquat Ali, the viceroy's private secretary noted that he gave 'the very clear impression' that 'the League could not afford to let the communal feeling in the country die down'.¹⁵⁸ He added, 'they regard this feeling as a proof of their care for Pakistan'.¹⁵⁹ The reaction of Congress leaders was markedly different. Their views on the communal problems were clearly thought-out and strongly held, and they were stunned by what happened in Calcutta and its aftermath. Regarding the role of Congress leaders in Bihar, where Hindus had perpetrated atrocities on Muslims, *The Statesman* of 8 November commented:

Bihar, however, has at least been relatively fortunate in this: that the services of more eminent personages have been promptly available to her than to forlorn Bengal in her several earlier afflictions. The Governor's absence at a critical time has indeed evoked remark. But among the influential visitors from the Centre Pandit Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad and Mr Kripalani have all been trenchant and unsparing in denunciation of barbarities wrought by their co-religionists upon a minority weak in numbers.¹⁶⁰

These men addressed different groups in rural and urban areas, scolded Hindus for their brutal behaviour towards those with whom they had

lived in peace for centuries. They appealed to them to behave rationally and threatened harsh punishment if killings did not cease. They refused to look upon it merely as a reaction to what had happened in Bengal. 'What happened in Noakhali was certainly bad enough. But surely that could not wash away the sins committed in Bihar,' Nehru stressed. Describing his method and its effects, Nehru wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel:

I have addressed some large crowds in the rural areas and I have no doubt that many of them had participated in this bad business. They are the ordinary peasant folk of Bihar, very simple, unsophisticated and rather likable. . . . Almost everywhere after my speech I asked them to pledge themselves to behave in future and they seemed to do so with some conviction raising their hands all together.

My own rough guess is that the next three days will see the end, more or less, of the active part of the disturbances. This is not only for military reasons but also partly because of other efforts. Of course, the ill-will that has been generated and the terrible effects of this horror will last a long time.¹⁶¹

While this was Nehru's response, Gandhi reacted in his own characteristic manner. On 16 August, the day on which communal frenzy was let loose in Calcutta in response to the Muslim League's call for 'Direct Action', Gandhi sat in Sevagram pondering, 'I have never had the chance to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots . . . the chance will still come to me.'¹⁶² Soon, he found himself called upon to extinguish the fires of communal frenzy that began raging in different parts of the country from that day onwards.

In his evening prayer meeting on 18 October, Gandhi mentioned that he had been requested to go to East Bengal to still the raging fury and that he was anxious to go there.¹⁶³ He had always looked upon non-violence as the weapon of the brave and was convinced that it was as sure and efficacious a means to face foreign aggression and internal disorder as it had proved itself to be for winning independence. He looked upon *ahimsa* as the weapon which could act as an instrument of change and worked out its rationale in its application to communal riots. He believed that hatred had its origin in fear and the way to overcome fear was to cultivate a faith that never flags. Its efficacy as a method to combat communal fanaticism had never been tried. He felt a spontaneous urge to go to Noakhali. Noakhali thus became to Gandhi the nodal point governing the future course of events for the whole of India. 'I do not know what I shall be able to do there. All I know is that I won't be at peace with myself unless I go there,' he said.¹⁶⁴

With all his impatience to get to Noakhali as soon as possible, Gandhi decided to stay in Calcutta for four days on the insistence of the Chief

Minister, Suhrawardy, in order to be in the city till the Muslim festival of *Baqr Id* was over. In the succeeding days, they hammered out a formula for the establishment of communal harmony in Bengal which later became the cornerstone of Gandhi's peace mission in Noakhali. The signatories to that formula constituted themselves into a peace committee composed of an equal number of Hindus and Muslims for the whole of Bengal with the Chief Minister as the chairman, to bring about communal peace in the province, 'a peace not imposed from without by the aid of the military and the police but by spontaneous heart-felt effort'. Fundamentals of far-reaching importance were embodied in their joint declaration:

It is our certain conviction that Pakistan cannot be brought about by communal strife nor can India be kept whole through the same means. It is also our conviction that there can be no conversion or marriage by force; nor has abduction any place in a society which has any claim to be called decent or civilized.¹⁶⁵

The Chief Minister, as the chairman of the committee, gave a guarantee that the Government of Bengal would implement the decisions of the committee. In Gandhi's eyes, the significance of the formula lay in the fact that both sides had agreed to rule out force and violence even in the settlement of issues on which they fundamentally differed, e.g. Pakistan. It further embodied the vital principle that religion could not sanctify any breach of fundamental morality. The formula thus provided the key to the solution of the problem not only of Noakhali but the whole of India.

News of riots in Bihar reached Gandhi before proceeding to Noakhali which pained him 'beyond measure'. As a penance for what had happened there, Gandhi decided to survive on low calorie diet. On 6 November, he addressed the Biharis in an open letter entitled, 'To Bihar'. In this, he warned the Biharis that the low diet would become a fast unto death if the erring Biharis did not turn over a new leaf. 'It is easy enough to report that things under the Muslim League Government in Bengal were no better and far worse and that Bihar was merely a result of the latter. A bad act of one party is no justification for a similar act by the opposite party,'¹⁶⁶ he added.

On 6 November, Gandhi left for Noakhali in a special train provided by the Bengal Government. After completing the arduous journey by boat and train, Gandhi reached Laksham and proceeded straight to a village where Hindus had been massacred. He was still uncertain of his plans and had not taken any decision regarding the method he was going to use. He heard accounts of loot, arson, forcible conversions, abduction and forced marriages of Hindu women with Muslims. On his

return he came to a village where there were about 6,000 Hindu refugees in a camp. Characteristically, Gandhi told them that they should be ashamed of running away; they should have fought off their prosecutors or submitted non-violently to their fate. Nirmal Kumar Bose, erstwhile Professor of Anthropology at Calcutta University and at that time his interpreter, was at first shocked when, at one of the meetings, Gandhi told women: 'I have not come to bring you consolation. I have come to bring you courage.' But later he noticed that these words had a magic effect and seemed to give them strength.¹⁶⁷

Gandhi came to the conclusion that he would post his own dedicated followers, one to each village, to act as vigilant watchmen of peace, dedicated to protecting the villagers with their lives, if necessary. He set up his own lonely headquarters in the village of Srirampur where he stayed for six weeks. On 2 January, Gandhi decided to continue his tour of Noakhali, moving from village to village and preaching the gospel of peace, a tour which became known as 'a village a day pilgrimage', a walking tour of seven weeks, during which he covered 47 villages. Among Indian leaders he was unique in having gone to the villages and struggled there in the interest of both the communities. The journey was an arduous one, and sometimes his feet bled. When he came to villages where massacres had taken place, he had the drawn look of a very old man, but in between, at halts, he looked young and sang lustily. From the end of February, he journeyed from village to village in Bihar.

The results of Gandhi's sojourn and walking tours in Bengal and Bihar were perhaps not as dramatic as those of his fast in Calcutta later, but his efforts as healer and peace-maker during November 1946 and March 1947 did enable these provinces to remain relatively peaceful. In a press statement, Suhrawardy expressed the view that his tour of East Bengal had helped in restoring confidence there.¹⁶⁸ Gandhi's work during this period also gave to him an opportunity to test his methods at a time of communal frenzy. These were to be put to test in Calcutta.

7. Attlee Announces the Decision to Transfer Power

During these first few weeks of 1947, the tempo of developments in India had quickened considerably. While the stalemate at the centre continued, in the provinces lines of demarcation were emerging. The Sikhs began to press for procedural safeguards in Section B, similar to those conceded to the Muslims in the Union Constituent Assembly and started to elaborate a scheme for the partition of the Punjab. Outside the assembly chamber, riots had begun in Punjab and elsewhere. There were signs of a demand for the creation of a separate province in West Bengal while the utterances of the Congress leaders of Assam showed that they were finding it difficult to decide on a future course of action. The

working of the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government was becoming increasingly frustrating. The prospects of agreement between the main parties and of their drawing up an acceptable constitution appeared to be receding.

In this situation, Wavell suggested that the British Government should announce a date for their final departure. He said that arguments against issuing such a statement were 'almost purely psychological', while there were many advantages in adopting such a course. Enumerating the advantages, the viceroy emphasized: 'The longer we stay, the more power we are bound to place in the hands of the majority party, the Hindus, to the detriment of the Minorities, and probably of the States.'¹⁶⁹ The cabinet gave immediate thought to the question of issuing a statement and an important consideration put forward was that 'the danger of civil war in India could not be ruled out. It might even be that it was Mr. Jinnah's intention to bring it about. Recent events in the Punjab had certainly made the situation considerably more difficult.'¹⁷⁰

Finally, in the hope that a definite date for the withdrawal of the British would increase the prospects of their reaching an accommodation, the Labour Government took a bold and momentous decision, namely to fix a date for withdrawal from India.¹⁷¹ In the meanwhile, Mountbatten had agreed to become the viceroy and discussions were proceeding with him on the question of directives to be given to him. On 20 February, the British Government issued a statement announcing their intention to transfer power by a date not later than June 1948 as its outstanding feature. Simultaneously, it was also announced that Mountbatten would succeed Wavell as Viceroy in March.¹⁷²

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Chapter X

India wins Independence

M.N. Das

1. British Decision to Transfer Power

IT WAS A HARD-WON VICTORY for the Indian National Congress when, at last, the British Prime Minister Clement Richard Attlee bowed to the inevitable and made the announcement in the House of Commons on behalf of His Majesty's Government on 20 February 1947 that 'it is their definite intention to take the necessary steps to effect the transference of power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948.'¹ Ever since Gandhi had given his final call to the British in August 1942 to quit India, the fast-moving sequence of events had pointed to the collapse of the empire and the coming of independence in no uncertain way. But it was also becoming apparent that the prospects of freedom were getting more and more entangled with the vicious politics of 'divide and quit' signifying ominous consequences for the country. The Attlee declaration accelerated the pace of political developments, demanding of the Congress, the British and the Muslim League their last desperate exercises before the transfer of power. The greatest as well as the worst challenges of time had been cast at the door of the Congress.

Nehru hailed the British decision as 'a wise and courageous one' while realizing at the same time the gravity of the situation that was to follow in its wake. 'It is a challenge to all of us,' he declared, 'and we shall try to meet it bravely in the spirit of that challenge. I trust that we shall all endeavour to get out of the ruts and end the internal conflicts that have frustrated our efforts and delayed our advance and accept this burden and responsibility keeping only the independence and advancement of India in view.'² He congratulated the Labour Government and the British people for their goodwill for the people of India after a long past of conflict and ill-will, and invited all those in India who kept themselves aloof to become partners in that historic undertaking, 'casting aside fear and suspicion'. It was obviously an invitation to the League for co-operation with the Congress on the eve of freedom.

Although the British declaration was clear about the termination of their rule, it was obscure about the manner of the transfer of power to Indian hands. It demanded, therefore, the most careful attention of the Congress High Command to the uncertainties involved. Mahatma Gandhi was away in Noakhali when the Attlee announcement came. On 24 February, Nehru wrote to him giving his own interpretation of it, saying:

It may not be exactly as we would have liked it. But the real thing is that they have finally decided and announced that they are quitting. Whatever their motives might be, they cannot go back on this and everything that happens from now onwards must be governed by it. The present position is that if the Muslim League comes into the Constituent Assembly, which is very unlikely, then the Cabinet Mission's statement of May 16th applies. Otherwise the limitations of that statement go and the Constituent Assembly functions really as a sovereign body without Sections and Groups and a limited Centre. But there is one limitation: that its decisions will apply only to the parts represented in it.³

The Cabinet Mission Plan, with all its demerits, did not recommend the division of India. But the declaration of 20 February opened up that possibility in a subtle way. It was for this reason the Muslim League welcomed it, describing it as 'the basis of real independence to each of the two major nations'. Faced with this serious threat, the Congress High Command began to study the positive and the negative aspects of the Attlee declaration in order to find its own solution to the problem of partition. It seemed most likely that the Muslim-majority provinces of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind would not like to join the Indian Union when established, even though the Union Constitution would be framed for all the provinces. In view of that eventuality, the High Command thought of treating those parts of Bengal and the Punjab which were fully represented in the Constituent Assembly as parts of the Indian Union. Thus the demand for a partition of the Punjab and Bengal from the Congress side was considered logically imperative to meet the challenges of the Attlee declaration.

After reading Attlee's speech, but before getting Nehru's interpretation of it, Gandhi wrote to Nehru: 'Much will depend upon what the Constituent Assembly will do and what you as the Interim Government are able to do. If the British Government are and are able to remain sincere the declaration is good. Otherwise it is dangerous.'⁴ The Viceroy Lord Wavell was meanwhile persuading Nehru to try to take Muslim League members into the Constituent Assembly in order to break the prevailing deadlock. Nehru had no objection, but he told the viceroy that in case the Congress and the League did not reach an agreement, he

and his colleagues would think of the possible partition of the Punjab and Bengal.

The hostility of the Muslim League towards the Congress had been getting more and more determined even before the British intention to leave India was declared. As the transfer of power became a certainty after Attlee's statement, the League leaders visualized their taking over the Muslim majority provinces wholesale, even those where League ministries did not exist. Simultaneously, taking advantage of their presence in the Interim Government, they tried to weaken the central authority as much as they could, so that their disruptive activities in the provinces could continue unopposed. For other members in the government, the situation was getting almost impossible.

We have seen [wrote Nehru to Wavell] the extraordinary spectacle of members of the Central Government leading and encouraging 'Direct Action' and disobedience of laws against the provincial government of the Punjab. This is still continuing openly and something similar is now being attempted in Frontier Province. It is difficult for me to conceive of any Central Government whose members function in this way. It is obvious that this matter requires urgent decision. Mr Attlee's statement throws no light upon it.⁵

Nehru was emphatic that the Congress would now have to proceed on fresh lines in view of the impending British withdrawal as the existing arrangement had proved hopeless. To make matters worse, Jinnah declared that 'the Muslim League will not yield an inch in their demand for Pakistan', and that he considered the Constituent Assembly defunct. The latest British approach was interpreted by him and his followers as the most hopeful sign for two sovereign states. If, however, the Congress stood in the League's way and the British aligned with the former, they were prepared for a civil war to settle the issue.

With these developments in the background, the Congress Working Committee met in Delhi from 6 to 8 March to discuss Attlee's declaration and to enunciate its policy in that regard. Two main issues confronted the committee on which bold decisions were necessary, namely, the position of the central government, and the situation in the Punjab as created by the Muslim League. After due deliberations the Working Committee passed the following resolution on the first issue:

The transfer of power, in order to be smooth, should be preceded by the recognition in practice of the Interim Government as a Dominion Government with effective control over the services and administration, and the Viceroy and Governor-General functioning as the constitutional head of the Government. The Central Government must necessarily function as a Cabinet with full authority and responsibility. Any other arrangement is

incompatible with good Government and is peculiarly dangerous during a transitional period full of political and economic crisis.⁶

The Punjab situation received the serious attention of the Working Committee. There could be no Pakistan without the Punjab. But the League had failed to make it its stronghold because of a Hindu-Sikh-Muslim Coalition Ministry which ruled the province and which rested on a wide popular base. In Jinnah's view, until and unless that government was dislodged from power and a League ministry installed in its place, before the impending transfer of power, there could be no Pakistan. He, therefore, decided to launch a Muslim mass movement to bring down a constitutional government by unconstitutional means. This led to serious communal disturbances, widespread violence, orgies of murder and arson, and populous cities like Amritsar and Multan became scenes of horror and devastation. The Congress Working Committee did not hesitate in criticizing the League members of the Interim Government whose hands had worked behind the Punjab riots. The committee had to consider the possible results of such illegal movements in the context of the transfer of power, and finally decided to pass the following resolution condemning the League's unlawful activities and demanding the partition of the Punjab:

These tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore it is necessary to find a way out which involved the least amount of compulsion. This would necessitate a division of the Punjab into two provinces, so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.⁷

The Working Committee felt compelled to adopt this drastic decision because of the fact that, owing to the League's non-participation in the Constituent Assembly, any constitution framed by that Assembly could apply only to those areas which accepted it. That being so, any province or part of a province which accepted the constitution and decided to join the Union should not be prevented from doing so. To avoid compulsion either way, the Working Committee decided upon the division of a province where the lines of demarcation between Muslim and non-Muslim areas remained more or less known. This principle of partition, as announced by the Congress, was applicable not only to the Punjab, but to Bengal as well.

Gandhi was shocked at the Congress decision. He decided not to give his consent to it. Partition of India or of any province on communal grounds would never solve the communal problem, but would aggravate it everywhere, he felt.

But the Congress High Command were greatly disturbed over

political developments in the Punjab, and became more firm on their demand for the partition of that province. The Muslim League movement there created a feeling of total frustration among the Sikhs and the Hindus, while the coalition government failed to protect their lives and property. A helpless governor, Evan Jenkins, invited the leader of the Muslim League Party in the Punjab Assembly, the Khan of Mamdot, to form ministry. But the League had no majority in the legislature, and Mamdot, in spite of his attempts to win over some Unionist Muslims to his side, failed to obtain adequate strength to form a government. As far as the Sikhs were concerned, any attempt on part of the governor to form a League ministry was viewed with the gravest of misapprehensions because of the League's demand for Pakistan. They decided to resist such attempts 'by every possible means' and thereby made the situation more critical. In the first week of March 1947, when the Congress Working Committee was meeting in Delhi, the Punjab was passing through a nightmare of violence which called for a radical approach to the whole problem.

On 5 March, the coalition government under Malik Khizar Hayat Khan resigned, after its failure to maintain law and order. Resting on the support of the Hindus and the Sikhs, this ministry had retained its popular base and in the larger interest of the province, was hostile to the concept of Pakistan. Its downfall signalled civil war. The Sikhs and the Hindus faced an ominous threat to their homeland in the wave of religious fanaticism let loose by the League. The League itself could not form a ministry, but that did not assuage the fears of the Hindus and Sikhs, who saw in the fall of the popular government, a plot to push the Punjab into the trap of the League. When, therefore, the governor imposed Section 93 of the Government of India Act and took the administration into his own hands, the Hindu-Sikh suspicion of the British move deepened. The League, on the other hand, felt free to incite the Muslims to greater violence, taking advantage of governor's rule.

Consequent upon these developments, widespread riots broke out in several towns and cities as well as in rural areas. Nehru rushed to some of the affected areas and made a statement to the press on 17 March, saying:

I have seen ghastly sights and I have heard of behaviour by human beings which would degrade brutes. . . . If politics are to be conducted in this way, then they cease to be politics and become some kind of jungle warfare, which reduces human habitations to the state of a desert. . . . Let people struggle for their political aim if they want to, but they must do so as human beings with a measure of human dignity.⁸

The same day, the Punjab Governor sent a long report to the viceroy describing the horrible barbarities of the Punjab riots:

In the rural areas gravely affected there has been extreme savagery. In the triangle Taxile-Murree-Gujar Khan there was a regular butchery of non-Muslims, particularly Sikhs. Cruelty and treachery seem to have been common. General Messervy told me that he had seen in hospital a child whose hands had been cut off; there are at least two well-authenticated stories of non-Muslims being lured into 'peace committees' and then murdered; and in one village, Sasali, a party of Sikhs, who surrendered to the Muslim attackers on a promise that their lives would be spared, were murdered out of hand.⁹

The governor saw thirty thousand refugees at Rawalpindi the day before he sent his report, while a much larger number of men were already on their way there. By 19 March, according to a report from the Punjab Chief Secretary, more than two thousand non-Muslims had been killed within the few days of the Muslim League movement, a figure believed to be grossly underestimated by others. Such a toll, to start with, was an indication of what was to follow when opinions for and against Pakistan gathered force.

The Congress Working Committee's demand for the partition of the Punjab was a timely step, creating consternation in the League mind that their claim to divide India and capture the whole of the Punjab was not to go unchallenged as far as the non-Muslim-majority area of that province was concerned. Knowing Gandhi's opposition to the idea, Nehru tried to plead with the Mahatma who was in Bihar that, under the changed circumstances, it was the only alternative left to the Congress. 'I feel convinced,' Nehru wrote to Gandhi on 25 March, 'and so did most of the members of the Working Committee that we must press for this immediate division so that reality might be brought into the picture. Indeed this is the only answer to partition as demanded by Jinnah. I found people in the Punjab agreeable to this proposal except Muslims as a rule.'¹⁰ Sardar Patel, too, wrote to Gandhi in justification of the Congress resolution saying that 'it was adopted after the deepest deliberation'. 'The situation in the Panjab,' he said, 'is far worse than in Bihar. . . . The military has taken over control. As a result, on the surface things seem to have quietened down somewhat. But no one can say when there may be a flare-up again. If that happens, I am afraid, even Delhi will not remain unaffected. But here of course we shall be able to deal with it.'¹¹

From the Punjab, communal disturbances spread to the North-West Frontier Province where, too, the Muslim League aimed at pulling down the Congress Government from power by inciting violence and lawlessness. There could be no Pakistan if the Frontier Province did not come in, but the province was not likely to come in as long as a strong Congress Ministry ruled there under the towering personality of Khan

Sahib, and so long as the Pathan population remained faithful to the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Therefore, in order to destabilize the situation there, the League started a so-called 'civil disobedience' movement against the Khan Sahib Ministry and created panic in the mind of the small non-Muslim minority in the province. Khan Sahib faced the agitation boldly, and the Khudai Khidmatgars, 'Servants of God', also known as the Red Shirts, an organization of the Frontier Pathans under Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, came forward to ensure the safety of the Hindus and the Sikhs in the city of Peshawar and elsewhere. To Khan Sahib's misfortune, the governor of the province, Olaf Caroe, worked openly in sympathy with the League and went against the interests of his own ministry, while an erstwhile Congressman, but a recent convert to League doctrines, Abdul Qayum Khan, spearheaded the League movement to win the Frontier for Pakistan.

The League was also active in Assam, fomenting trouble there in the hope of including the whole of Bengal and Assam in Pakistan. But, in the light of the latest Congress demand for the partition of the provinces, the Bengal Hindus, who were in great majority in the western half of the province and in the city of Calcutta, came forward to demand separation from the Muslim-majority area of eastern Bengal. The governor of the province, Frederick Burrows, reported to the viceroy on 19 March that 'the movement for partitioning Bengal is gathering momentum'.¹²

Pre-independence politics was thus taking clearer shape in respect of the most pressing and urgent issue concerning the future of India, namely, unity or partition. If partition was the irrevocable demand of the Muslim League, the Congress proposed a partition within the proposed partition to end the crisis and lead the country towards freedom. Whether this approach could bring a logical solution to the continuing crisis now depended on the new viceroy who was coming to succeed Wavell as the last Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten. The supreme task before him was to implement the most difficult part of the Attlee declaration of 20 February 1947, namely:

His Majesty's Government will have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government in British India should be handed over, on the due date, whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people.

Lord Wavell left India an unhappy man. Appointed as viceroy by the wartime British Premier, Winston Churchill, he had seldom enjoyed his

confidence. Premier Attlee, too, had not been happy with his performance and accused him of 'inconsistency'. On the other hand, some of the Congress leaders had felt impressed with the viceroy's sincerity in handling problems. Anyway, the British cabinet felt it desirable to enact the transfer of power through a new viceroy, and Attlee, while announcing his statement of 20 February in the House of Commons, said: 'Lord Wavell has discharged this high office during this very difficult period with devotion and a high sense of duty. It has, however, seemed that the opening of a new and final phase in India is an appropriate time to terminate this war appointment.'¹³ Wavell, however, took it to heart as a 'dismissal'. The decision about his removal created some rethinking in Congress circles on whether his continuance would have served the cause better. Maulana Azad had found in him 'a rugged, straightforward soldier, devoid of verbiage, and direct both in approach and statement. He was not devious like a politician, but came straight to the point and created in the mind an impression of great sincerity.' The Maulana felt sorry that Wavell was being removed at a time when his attempts had opened the door for a changed atmosphere. 'I am confident,' he told the press, 'that India will never forget this service of Lord Wavell, and when the time comes for an historian of independent India to appraise the relations of England and India, he will give Lord Wavell credit for opening a new chapter in those relations.'¹⁴ Sardar Patel also was impressed with Wavell's practical and direct approach to various issues. Nehru, although he had his differences with the viceroy, was not against him, but an impression was created in Wavell's mind, soon after his departure, that the former, after finding evidences that the viceroy's 'staff was at heart biased against Congress', expressed his displeasure to Stafford Cripps which had influenced the cabinet decision on his removal.¹⁵

On 22 March Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi, and the next day Wavell left. The new viceroy was sworn in on 24 March.

Only 46, and of the British royal lineage, his mother being Queen Victoria's grand-daughter, Mountbatten enjoyed the confidence of the British Prime Minister, the Cabinet and of the Leader of the Opposition, Winston Churchill. It was also felt by some British ministers that Nehru would favour his appointment.

Nehru was indeed pleased about it because of his earlier, though brief, acquaintance with him. When, in accordance with the direction of the Congress Working Committee, Nehru paid a visit to Malaya and Singapore in mid-March 1946, Mountbatten was the Supreme South East Asia Commander, and in charge of the British Military Administration in Malaya. The Cabinet Mission had not then visited India, and Nehru was far from any prospect of becoming a member of the Interim

Government. Moreover, he had gone to Malaya to study, among other things, the case of the ex-INA men who had fought against the British. Yet, Mountbatten had accorded him a friendly reception, which was quite unexpected and against the desire of his top advisers. Mountbatten provided his eminent guest with every facility during his eight-day visit. He had agreed to Nehru's addressing a meeting of the civilian elements of the ex-INA personnel numbering three thousand, besides other meetings.

Lord Louis informed [reported Nehru to Azad] that he had issued directions that no one, including members of the Indian Army, should be stopped from coming to my meetings or visiting me personally. As a matter of fact large numbers of Indian soldiers of the regular army did attend my meetings and I had occasion to meet several groups of British and Indian Officers and to answer their many questions in regard to the future of India.¹⁶

By his gesture of goodwill at that time Mountbatten had greatly impressed Nehru as a man of liberal outlook who understood the meaning of changing times and changing relations. His appointment as the viceroy to wind up the Raj was naturally viewed by Nehru as a right step.

The new viceroy's greatest political asset was the wide discretionary powers he had been given to take decisions and undertake swift action without the need to refer constantly to the home government. Speedy decisions were demanded at a time when the situation was highly explosive and solutions to problems could not wait. Lord Pethick Lawrence and his successor, Lord Listowel, as the Secretaries of State, had no intentions of interfering with the viceroy's work. With a mandate to accomplish his great mission of handing over power to Indian hands, Mountbatten was required to deal more with the Indian leaders than with his masters at home. And the Indian leaders were in a hurry to come to a settlement, since delay spelt disaster for millions. The time was over when they regarded the British as their arch enemy. The threat to freedom now came from within.

2. The Mountbatten Mission: Prelude to the Plan

Mountbatten had no illusions about the difficulty of his task, and he was already aware of the dilemma that faced the Congress and the League in respect of the demand for Pakistan as well as the demand for partition within the proposed partition. He had discussed this with Wavell before the latter's departure, and wanted to hear the views of the Indian leaders before coming to his own conclusion.

The day he was sworn in, the viceroy met Nehru. When Mountbatten asked him what was the 'greatest problem confronting India', Nehru

surprised him by replying that the economic problem was the most serious of all. He expressed his grave concern over the functioning of the Interim Government since 'the Muslim League did not intend that the Government should have its own powers and stand on its own feet'. The viceroy wondered how the transfer of power could be possible when the League attitude was so negative. Thereupon, Nehru told the viceroy about the Congress resolution regarding the partition of the Punjab, and the latter re-assured him, saying that he intended to approach the problems realistically.¹⁷

The next day, 25 March, Sardar Patel came to demand of the new viceroy that he should 'dismiss the Muslim League members of the Cabinet because they represented an organisation which, as a result of their direct action resolution, had the avowed intention of attacking the central organisation'. He pointed to the mischief the League was creating in Assam, the Punjab and the Frontier Province.¹⁸ Azad, even so late in time, was still hopeful that the viceroy would succeed in 'deflating' Jinnah who really had no leg to stand on. Jinnah's great object, Azad felt, was to have the League ministers included in the central government, and once that was done, never to withdraw from it. Azad was obviously hopeful that Mountbatten would work for a united India under the Cabinet Mission Plan.

But the viceroy was almost convinced from the start that the Congress and the League would never agree to co-operate, and decided to inform Jinnah that 'the grant of Pakistan would involve, by application of the same principle, the partition of the Punjab and Bengal'.¹⁹ It was Gandhi's opposition to any idea of partition, of which Mountbatten was perfectly aware, which worried him more. He was therefore anxious to meet the mahatma and understand his mind.

From 31 March, Gandhi had a series of meetings with the viceroy. The mahatma referred to the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' which kept the Hindu-Muslim animosity alive, and cautioned Mountbatten that he would have to reap what his predecessors had deliberately sown. Expressing his views regarding a possible solution, he surprised the viceroy by advancing a novel idea of his own: that 'Mr. Jinnah should forthwith be invited to form the Central Interim Government with members of the Muslim League'. This government was to operate under the viceroy in the way the existing Interim Government was operating.²⁰

A solution like this, coming from Gandhi himself, and at a time like that, staggered Mountbatten. 'What would Mr. Jinnah say to such a proposal?' he asked. Gandhi replied: 'If you tell him I am the author he will reply "Wiley Gandhi".' 'And I presume Mr. Jinnah will be right?' Mountbatten asked. 'No,' Gandhi replied, 'I am entirely sincere in my suggestion.'²¹

The Gandhi Plan for an All-India Jinnah-Government, as it came to be called, manifested the mahatma's strong determination to keep India united, and he proposed it in absolute sincerity to convince Jinnah that his fear of Hindu domination was unfounded. His plan guaranteed Congress co-operation 'so long as all measures that Mr. Jinnah's Cabinet bring forward are in the interests of the Indian people as a whole'. Gandhi even went to the extent of suggesting that, within the framework of the plan, 'Jinnah will be perfectly free to present for acceptance a scheme of Pakistan even before the transfer of power, provided, however, that he is successful in his appeal to reason and not to the force of arms, which he abjures for all time for this purpose. Thus, there will be no compulsion in this matter over a Province or a part thereof.'²²

For a time the viceroy was obliged to pay attention to Gandhi's unique proposals, but his staff advised that he should not allow himself to be drawn into negotiations with the mahatma, but should only listen to his advice.²³ It seemed obvious that Patel did not like the idea of handing over India to Jinnah. It was equally obvious that Jinnah would not accept the offer because of his deep suspicion of the Hindus and the Congress. For the Congress High Command, too, Gandhi's idealism was unacceptable and impractical. But, opposed to the whole concept of partition, the mahatma tried his utmost to persuade several members of the Congress Working Committee to accept his plan. Ironically enough, none of them agreed to it except Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Confessing his failure to carry his disciples with him, a sad Mahatma wrote to the viceroy on 11 April: 'I would still love to take the place that the late C.F. Andrews took. He represented no one but himself. And if you ever need my service on its merits it will be always at your disposal.'²⁴ While withdrawing himself from politics as it turned towards partition, Gandhi nevertheless advised the viceroy that the Congressmen in the Interim Government were stalwart and seasoned servants of the nation and therefore they would be competent advisers.

Gandhi left the capital for Bihar to stay with the terror-stricken Muslims of that riot-torn province. Knowing the pathos in his mind, and his loneliness, Sarojini Naidu wrote to him: 'Beloved Pilgrim, you are, I learn, setting out once more on your chosen *Via Dolorosa* in Bihar. The way of sorrow for you may indeed be the way of hope and solace for many millions of suffering human hearts. Blessed be your pilgrimage.'²⁵

Before Gandhi left Delhi, Mountbatten gave an indication of the two alternative solutions which had appeared to him as plausible, namely, India could remain united under the Cabinet Mission Plan, or the Congress and the League could agree to a truncated Pakistan. He also requested the Mahatma to give his signature to a statement denouncing violence and the use of force for political ends which was also to be

signed by Jinnah. Gandhi appended his signature on the scripts in the hope that Jinnah, if he would sign the paper, 'could not again use force for political purposes'.²⁶ Jinnah, of course, did sign, and the joint Gandhi-Jinnah statement contained the following appeal:

We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to the innocent people irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims. We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder, but also to avoid both in speech and writing, any incitement to such acts.²⁷

In the India of 1947 any exercise of this kind was fruitless until a permanent political settlement was reached. Even if the Congress could take the peace appeal by Gandhi in some seriousness, the League was not prepared to heed it in the context of its own policy of direct action. Worse than that, apart from abusing the spirit of the appeal, the League leaders made it an instrument to embitter communal feelings further. When the viceroy requested Gandhi to become a party to it, the latter pleaded that the appeal should be signed by Acharya Kripalani as the Congress President and by Jinnah as the President of the League, so that, as the leaders of their respective parties, they could authoritatively command their followers to abstain from violence. But since Mountbatten considered Gandhi's signature essential, the latter agreed, but also pressed for the Congress President's signature to lend the appeal the weight of the party. To this Jinnah did not agree. He wanted the appeal to go under the signatures of only Gandhi and himself. The viceroy succumbed to his pressure, and Gandhi did not want to be rigid on the issue in view of the cause the statement sought to promote.

The Gandhi-Jinnah appeal having been announced, the League exposed its motives when its mouthpiece, *The Dawn*, commented:

There is novelty in the manner of the dramatic appeal which the leaders of India's two nations have signed. . . . The next step should follow without much delay and in the logical sequence. We stress the word 'logical' advisedly because the very fact of the Viceroy having chosen the Quaid-i-Azam and Mr. Gandhi for the purpose of an appeal of this kind being conveyed to the public is tantamount to a recognition that two voices and not one must speak in this context. Why is it necessary that two should make such an appeal if it is not recognised that there are two peoples, two nations, who would respect their own respective leader only?²⁸

The joint peace appeal served no purpose. Gandhi had assumed that,

as the appeal had been signed by him at the instance of the Viceroy, the latter was indirectly a party to it, and therefore, maintenance of communal peace was as much responsibility as of the Congress, even if the League betrayed the trust. But for Mountbatten, the Indian civil war had gone beyond the range of his administration's control, and to escape the disgrace of failure, his only concern was to bring the parties to an agreement at the earliest. 'Let us face it,' the Congress President told the viceroy, 'you have been heavily defeated by Mr. Jinnah in your first round with him.' The deteriorating law and order situation and the failure of the provincial administration in some of the Muslim-majority provinces on account of the Muslim League crusade prompted the Congress president to advise the viceroy that 'The point has now been reached at which the Congress must reluctantly accept the fact that the Muslim League will never voluntarily come into a Union of India. Rather than have a battle we shall let them have their Pakistan, provided you will allow the Punjab and Bengal to be partitioned in a fair manner.'²⁹

The viceroy was driving exactly the same solution into Jinnah's mind during his series of interviews with him in the first half of April. For seven years by then the Quaid-e-Azam had dreamt of an independent state for the Indian Muslims, the shape and size of which had been designed mainly by himself with confusing inspiration from different sources. When early in the 1930s, Chaudhry Rahmat Ali conceived of a political state for his coreligionists in India, adjoining the cluster of Muslim States across India's north-western frontiers, he coined the word Pakistan by taking the letter *P* from the Punjab, *A* from Afghana, i.e., the North-West Frontier Province, *K* from Kashmir, *S* from Sind, and *Tan* from Baluchistan, he was laying the conceptual foundation of a new Islamic country which had some validity of its own. But when Jinnah became the champion of the separatist cause, he enlarged his vision to make the Pakistan of his concept a much bigger state. This he could not do all at once, but in stages, apparently because the concept required thinking and rethinking before being given a final shape. Thus one finds that the League Lahore Resolution of 1940 originally demanded that geographically contiguous units be demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with necessary territorial readjustments, that 'the areas in which the Muslims are in a majority as in the North-West and Eastern Zones of India should be grouped together to constitute independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.' The objective of the resolution was to separate the *Muslim majority areas*, on opposite wings of India, from the rest of the country. But, within the next four years, Jinnah developed his demand for a Pakistan 'composed of two Zones, north-west and north-east, comprising six provinces, namely Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province, the Punjab, Bengal, and Assam subject to

territorial adjustments that may be agreed upon as indicated in the Lahore Resolution.*

It passes comprehension as to how Jinnah could identify the Muslim majority *areas* for at least three of the major *provinces* such as the Punjab, Bengal and Assam in their entirety. Under any scrutiny, the terms such as, areas, regions, zones or territories could never be equated with the existing administrative boundaries of the provinces containing composite populations. Similarly, by suggesting 'territorial adjustments' Jinnah did not visualize a demand for large-scale partition of the major provinces. All that he could anticipate was some minor adjustment of borders, if necessary, and that too, to his advantage. The Quaid-e-Azam was absolutely hopeful of taking away all the six provinces of India for Pakistan, and Kashmir, too, because of its Muslim population, once the British accepted his demand for partition.

His soaring ambition could rise to that inconceivable height for two reasons. Firstly, the Congress in its total opposition to the partition of India did not think it necessary to expose the anomalies contained in the Pakistan proposal, and, secondly, the British, in their endeavour to keep the Congress down and to secure maximum Muslim support during the war period, encouraged Jinnah to inflate his demands. Thus, unchallenged and patronized, the Muslim League fought on for Pakistan till at last the Congress and the viceroy were faced with stark realities when the final hour struck for a settlement. Jinnah had never expected British betrayal on the issue of Pakistan when Churchill and the Conservatives were solidly behind him, and when the British general sympathy for his cause, both in India and England, was never in doubt. The last viceroy was also bent upon giving him justice, and more, so it came as a shock to Jinnah when Mountbatten was unable to give him all that he wanted in the face of the stance the Congress had adopted.

After discussing the inevitability of the partition of the Punjab and Bengal in several meetings with him, Mountbatten finally disclosed to Jinnah on 10 April 1947 the shape of Pakistan to come. 'You claim the right of a large minority people', said the viceroy, 'to partition on a big scale. If I grant you this how can I refuse Congress, who will press for exactly the same right for the large Hindu minorities in the Punjab and Bengal to be partitioned?' Rejecting Jinnah's frantic arguments that a truncated, moth-eaten Pakistan would not form a viable state, Mountbatten gave him to understand that the real Pakistan would possess, in fact, Sind, half of Punjab and 'probably the N.W.F.P.', and part of Bengal only. The rest of the country would remain Hindustan.

*Jinnah gave this definition of Pakistan to Gandhi in a letter dated 25 September 1944.

Disappointed and distressed, and bitterly against the Congress for 'deliberately drawing a red herring across my path', Jinnah threatened that, in case Bengal and Punjab were partitioned, he would demand the partition of Assam, the viceroy readily agreed on grounds of a common principle. Against Jinnah's complaints that the viceroy was 'running his Pakistan by cutting out half of the Punjab and Bengal including Calcutta and by making it economically very difficult if not impossible to function', Mountbatten demanded to know 'why he was not prepared to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan, which gave him the whole of the Punjab, the whole of Bengal including Calcutta and the whole of Sind, with complete autonomy, and in fact accorded to him a really worthwhile and workable Pakistan.'³⁰ But when Jinnah stood rigid and would have nothing to do with the Cabinet Mission Plan, the viceroy decided to work out partition logically. When Nehru was informed about Jinnah's demand for partition of Assam, he agreed that 'this was a perfectly reasonable request and could easily be agreed to',³¹ knowing for certain that only one district of the province might opt out of India.

By the latter part of April people everywhere started discussing the possible aspects of the coming plan, partition of the two provinces seemed a certainty. The future of the Frontier Province also became a subject of speculation; and the future of the princely states a matter of hot debate in Congress quarters.

While uncertainty loomed large, the communal frenzy in the provinces likely to be affected assumed alarming proportions. The Congress High Command could not remain silent spectators to growing violence, while the League leaders, in a desperate bid to win the provinces they wanted, did everything possible to spread lawlessness. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, being in charge of the Home portfolio, found the situation intolerable and held the viceroy primarily responsible for the growing crisis. 'Since you have come out here,' he charged Mountbatten on 24 April in a show of bitter feeling, 'things have got much worse. There is a civil war on and you are doing nothing to stop it. You won't govern yourself and you won't let the Central Government govern. You cannot escape responsibility for this bloodshed.' The Sardar was at the end of his patience in dealing with the League members in the government and was enraged at League activities in some of the provinces. Finding the British attitude an obstacle to the stern measure he wanted to adopt to end the chaos, he finally told the viceroy: 'If you will not act yourself, then turn over full authority to the Central Government and let us stop the Muslim League war in the Punjab and N.W. Frontier; let us stop the Muslim League being mobilised in Bengal to attack Assam; let us govern.'³²

The viceroy had no answer. The sooner he prepared the plan, and sooner he transferred power, the better would be the prospect of an

honourable withdrawal. As he hastened towards Britain's withdrawal, hectic political manoeuvres were afoot in Bengal, the Punjab and the Frontier Province. The Congress had to face British diplomacy on the one hand and the League challenge on the other as pre-partition politics gathered sudden momentum.

3. Future of Bengal, the Punjab and the Frontier

Bengal

Much before the partition of Bengal was discussed at the political level by the Congress High Command, Field Marshal Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief, cautioned the British authorities that, in view of the Muslim League's demand to include the whole of Bengal in Pakistan, that

A Hindustan without Calcutta and the control of the Bay of Bengal is not a practical proposition and the realisation of this by the Hindus will inevitably lead to war between Hindustan and Pakistan. In this event, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would be committed to fight for the retention of this zone by Pakistan and might well become involved in a world war on this account.³³

Auchinleck was anticipating an alliance between India and Russia in due course, chiefly because of India's natural hostility towards Pakistan and her possible desire to unite the country once again. His warning to the British Government not to overplay its part in creating a Pakistan of Jinnah's desire was prompted by his desire to keep India in the British Commonwealth in the larger global interest of Great Britain.

What the Field Marshal had concluded from the military point of view was not within the knowledge of the Congress. No matter what the British or the League thought, from their angle of interest, the Congress had to face the problem of Bengal in the most practical and logical way when the creation of Pakistan could no longer be avoided. Luckily enough, it found the province geographically so divided that its eastern half contained a predominantly Muslim population whereas its western half was overwhelmingly Hindu. No doubt Jinnah's prospective Pakistan carried great appeal to the Bengali Muslims when it painted the whole of the province as the part of a Muslim State, to enjoy the bliss of a Muslim Government in perpetuity, with the prosperous and more advanced Hindu population reduced to permanent subjugation. With the metropolis of Calcutta as the capital of this Eastern Pakistan or of Pakistan as a whole, and having the province of Assam as an appendage, a Pakistani-Bengal obviously appeared most covetable to the Bengali Muslims. They seldom doubted the possibility of such a future, thanks to the hopes created by the Muslim League.

In the elections of 1946, taking advantage of the system of communal weightage, the League had captured 114 seats, as against 87 seats of the Congress in the Bengal Legislative Assembly, and had formed a government with Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy as premier. The League government campaigned for Pakistan, and to terrorize the centre and the Hindus, they enacted the Great Calcutta Killing of August 1946 with the slogan, '*Lar ke Lenge Pakistan*' — 'we shall win Pakistan by fighting for it.' Their subsequent role in advancing the cause left no doubt in the Muslim mind that the whole of Bengal was sure to turn into Pakistan very soon.

When, however, the Congress High Command decided to agree to partition on condition that Bengal and the Punjab were also to be partitioned, grim reality overtook the Bengali Hindus and Muslims alike. While the Hindus felt relieved that western Bengal, including Calcutta, were not going to be allowed to become part of the impending Pakistan, a sudden gloom descended on the Muslims: their part of Bengal, isolated from its natural western extension, would be beset with economic difficulties. Whereas western Bengal would be linked with the rest of India as a continuous landmass, eastern Bengal would be situated far away from the rest of the 'Pure Land', and would have to lead an isolated existence. The hope that the whole of Assam would be part of Pakistan had also dwindled.

When the idea of partition was first mooted, Bengal Congressmen found themselves in rather a delicate situation. They saw that the Hindu Mahasabha, under the leadership of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, was spearheading a campaign for the formation of a Hindu Bengal and a Muslim Bengal by dividing the province into almost two equal halves. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi opposed this idea with the ardent hope that India would be spared partition in any form. Sarat Chandra Bose stood with Gandhi, to preserve the traditional unity of the Bengali people, based on their deep-rooted cultural and linguistic unity. But, within a short while, the partition of Bengal came to dominate Bengali Hindu thought so deeply that the Bengal Congress came forward to make it their own cause in the larger interest of India.

The Congress in Bengal at this particular time was at the peak of its popularity because of its stand in defending the officers and soldiers of the Indian National Army who were facing trial at the hands of the British. The heroic role of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose outside India and the stories of the INA had stirred the imagination of the Bengali people to such an extent that the province witnessed a wave of nationalist upsurge under the Congress banner. The failure of the League Government to deal with the economic suffering of the people after the Great Bengal Famine gave yet another handle to the Congress to win popular

sympathy by criticizing League misrule. Above all, fear of formation of Pakistan drove the Hindu masses to the Congress for protection, when, under the pressure of public opinion, Bengali Congressmen could not but uphold the cause of partition of the province.

The attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha has surprised nobody, reported the Bengal governor, Frederick Burrows, to the viceroy, but the Muslims have been quick to criticise the manner in which the local Congress leaders have subordinated nationalism to communalism. The Communists continue to oppose partition, as does Sarat Bose's Forward Bloc, but the weight of Hindu opinion has definitely swung against them. The Muslim leaders are trying to laugh the movement off as a political stunt to kill Pakistan, but I think they now realise that the partitionists mean business.³⁴

Kiran Sankar Roy, the leader of the Congress parliamentary group in the Bengal legislature, had in fact told the governor that the Hindus would never agree to become citizens of Pakistan, even if this meant splitting the Bengali homeland.

The Congress made a quick assessment of the advantages of partition, in the given circumstances. Of Bengal's 60 million inhabitants spread over a territory of about 77,500 square miles, excluding Cooch Behar and Tripura, 98 per cent were either Hindus or Muslims the rest being other communities such as Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Buddhists and Europeans. The ratio of population was roughly 33 million Muslims to 25 million Hindus, or 55 per cent to 44 per cent. The distribution of the two communities over the five divisions or 26 districts of the province was no doubt far from being even, but that seemed to be of no vital consequence when partition was thought of. In the predominantly Muslim divisions of Dacca and Chittagong, there were large Hindu elements in the district headquarter towns of Dacca, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Barisal, and there was even a Hindu majority in several big and important towns of those divisions. Similarly, in the less predominantly Muslim division of Rajshahi, the four headquarter towns of Rangpur, Rajshahi, Bogra and English Bazar, each had a Hindu majority in a Muslim majority district. In spite of such problems of population distribution, the Congress opted for partition in the hope of getting the Presidency Division, the Burdwan Division, Calcutta, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling, along with portions of Malda, Dinajpur, Faridpur, and Barisal. This envisaged an area of about 34,000 square miles for the Indian Union, out of the total area of Bengal, and a population of 25 million, of which Muslims would be about 8 million. Thus, while West Bengal with India would possess about 30 per cent of its population as a Muslim minority, East Bengal with Pakistan would have a similar 30 per cent Hindu minority.

When the Congress demand for partition on the above lines became more and more vehement, with the general Hindu opinion in favour of it, including that of the Hindu Mahasabha, the League premier, Shaheed Suhrawardy saw the ruin of a prosperous East Pakistan in the division of Bengal. In a sudden and surprising political move, he came forward to propagate and champion the cause of a united sovereign Bengal, independent of both Hindustan and Pakistan. On 26 April 1947, he appeared before Mountbatten with his attractive proposal and the viceroy was greatly attracted by the Suhrawardy proposal in the hope that an independent Bengal could be kept within the British Commonwealth, with Calcutta as the nerve centre of the British commercial enterprise in the eastern hemisphere. If India was going to be partitioned in any case, Mountbatten saw no harm if the subcontinent contained Hindustan, Pakistan, Banglasthan, and possibly Princestan, as independent units.

The viceroy and the Bengal premier discussed the issue in all seriousness. The latter presented his suggestion that, in the coming plan, Bengal should be offered a chance to decide 'whether it was to join Pakistan, Hindustan, or remain independent' and gave his assurance that 'given enough time he was confident that he could get Bengal to remain as a complete entity'. He also assured the viceroy that he could get Jinnah to agree that Bengal need not join Pakistan if it was prepared to remain united.

Mountbatten gave his consent, saying that 'this was very good news, for although I was against splitting India up into many units, I considered it far better to keep Bengal as one economic unit than to have it partitioned.'³⁵

Suhrawardy thereupon expressed the hope that British Officers would help in the formation of a Bengal Army since, as he confirmed, 'Bengal has every intention of remaining in the Commonwealth.' The viceroy emphasized the need for a speedy decision since the time at his disposal was very short.

To feel assured that Jinnah would approve of such an extraordinary move, Mountbatten asked him the same day his opinion about it. 'I should be delighted,' answered Jinnah forthwith. 'What is the use of Bengal without Calcutta; they had much better remain united and independent; I am sure that they would be on friendly terms with us.'³⁶

Back in Bengal, with the viceroy's blessings, Suhrawardy started propagating that it was necessary to detach Bengal from the all-India tangle and to keep the province united and independent. In many sweet words he suggested to the Hindus that, in an independent Bengal of his design, there would be no question of the Muslim majority tyrannizing over the Hindu minority, because the internal strength of the Hindus

would make that impossible. 'It will just be fatuous and suicidally fatuous for any Muslim government to give an unfair deal to the Hindus of Bengal,' he declared.

Painting a picture of independent Bengal in the best possible hues, he even held out the prospect of a greater Bengal, laying claim to the districts of Manbhum and Singbhum, Purnea and Surma Valley, so that the territory of his vision would become a great land indeed, rich and prosperous — 'a portion of the world that will certainly surpass any other country of like dimension'.

Suhrawardy's call did not fool either the Congress Party or the Hindu population. It was even doubtful if he was himself confident of success at any stage of his campaign, in spite of the British support. When his gamble did not open up hopes of progress, the shrewd premier simultaneously intrigued to get Calcutta for East Pakistan. He informed the viceroy through the latter's principal secretary, Eric Mievile, that 'a partition of Bengal will leave Calcutta either with one or with the other and it will be such a sore point that either Calcutta will be destroyed or will be the battle ground of future warfare.'³⁷ The Bengal governor, Burrows, also thought of Calcutta's future in case the province was divided and suggested to the viceroy that it be made a 'Free City'. Since, a proposal could only add one more problem to the existing ones, Mountbatten warned Burrows saying:

I do not like the idea of a free city. It goes against all the principles on which the rest of the plan is based, it leaves Calcutta cut off from Muslim Bengal, it will not be acceptable to the Hindus, and I do not see how we can enforce it or prevent a fight for the city next year. Besides which it is not for me to make Pakistan into a sensible scheme. I want it to be seen for what it is, while giving the Muslims everything to which they are entitled, and every chance to work out their own salvation.³⁸

Together with this warning, however, the viceroy informed the governor that 'my scheme leaves the door open to a united but independent Bengal belonging neither to Pakistan nor Hindustan' and asked, 'Do you think Suhrawardy could bring this off?'³⁹

The governor and the premier remained greatly worried about Calcutta, knowing for certain that the city with its Muslim population of only about 24 per cent had no chance of being handed over to East Pakistan. Hinting at another round of violence on the lines of the Great Calcutta Killing, Suhrawardy threatened that 'in the end, the tussle will rage round Calcutta and its environments', and Burrows met the viceroy on 1 May to plead that 'for the future prosperity of Calcutta, if it was not to perish, the city should if possible be given the chance to serve both halves of Bengal if the province was partitioned'. Painting a pathetic

picture of the future Eastern Pakistan, how 'It would stagnate to such an extent and become so poor that it would end up as a rural slum', he disclosed that Suhrawardy was not prepared to accept Eastern Bengal without Calcutta as Eastern Pakistan even if Jinnah agreed to it. At the minimum, the Premier was prepared 'to accept Calcutta as an international city'.

The Bengal governor was, however, told by the viceroy's advisers that the Congress would never accept anything but a clear-cut partition of province, and if the government 'fell foul of Congress, it would be impossible to continue to run the country'.⁴⁰ He was further reminded that 'the viceroy had to look at the question from an all-India point of view, whereas he looked at it from a provincial point of view. The viceroy could not jeopardise the safety of all India for the sake of one Province'. The idea of keeping Calcutta under a special status was thus ruled out.

All that Mountbatten wanted for Bengal was to keep it united and independent, if possible, and he encouraged the governor to work for this, together with Suhrawardy. He advised him to persuade his premier to form a coalition government with the Congress, offering as bait that, if that was done, there could be a provision in the plan for an independent Bengal if the Bengalis so desired. He also asked the governor to prevail upon Suhrawardy to promise joint electorates to the Hindus. But the governor discounted Suhrawardy's ability to undertake any major step, and informed the viceroy that the premier's own position in the Muslim League was far from stable.

Going a step ahead, Mountbatten tried to convince Bengal's Leader of the Opposition, Kiran Sankar Roy, about the value of keeping Bengal united and independent, fully aware of the fact that Roy had already submitted an appeal for division signed by the non-Muslim members of the Bengal Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. For a moment, the viceroy was able to enthuse him concerning the desirability of Bengali unity with the prospects of joint electorates and a coalition government. 'You have not a moment to lose,' he told Roy, advising him to see the premier and the governor and start working for an independent Bengal before it was too late for inclusion in the plan.⁴¹

Suhrawardy, Sarat Chandra Bose and Kiran Sankar Roy carried on negotiations for a few days for maintaining the unity of Bengal. On his part, the viceroy gave an assurance to Suhrawardy that, if an agreement could be reached between Hindus and Muslims on a coalition government basis, he would request the Congress High Command to agree that the final announcement on the plan would 'contain no reference to the partition of Bengal'. It is surprising that Mountbatten could advance thus for in his ambition to retain Bengal as a separate

independent unit in the coming plan although he knew that 'Nehru was not in favour of an independent Bengal unless closely linked to Hindustan'. Still more surprisingly, if Mountbatten's analysis of the mind of Nehru as he reported it to the Bengal Governor early in May is correct, Nehru had come to feel that 'a partition now would anyhow bring East Bengal into Hindustan in a few years'.⁴² It was as if the future Prime Minister of India intuitively doubted the existence of East Bengal as a part of Pakistan for any length of time when he pressed for the partition of Bengal as a pre-condition for Pakistan.

To the Congress High Command the concept of independent Bengal was nothing less than a grand conspiracy on part of the League. Once Bengal was made a sovereign state, by virtue of Muslim majority in the legislature, the League would manipulate to take the state to Pakistan, when the Congress would have no power to intervene. Since most Congressmen in Bengal wanted to keep the Hindu part of Bengal with India, Suhrawardy's trick did not attract them to an independent existence. Reacting against this pro-India attitude of the Bengalis, and as a last resort to keep his campaign going, the premier tried his best to create anti-India feeling in Bengal by announcing: 'Bengal divided will mean a Bengal prey to the people of other parts of India, waiting to be exploited for their benefit.' And, while proclaiming that the demand for partition was nothing but an attempt to capture the rich prize of Calcutta, he betrayed his inner motive saying: 'Without peace and security the city will be next to nothing, and it is therefore that I have directed the attention of Hindu leaders to this aspect, viz., that if Calcutta is to be a prize, it will only be a prize if it is the jewel of a united, undivided, sovereign Bengal.'⁴³

Keeping a watch on Suhrawardy's moves, Nehru pointed out to the viceroy that the real intention of the League leader in pleading for united Bengal was to keep Calcutta in their possession. Since a united Bengal was totally out of the question as far as the Congress was concerned he cautioned Mountbatten to guard against the possible League vandalism in the city at the time of partition. 'Calcutta disturbances were more likely to take the form of deliberate destruction' at the instance of the existing provincial Muslim League government, he felt.⁴⁴

Suhrawardy's plan finally ended in nothing. His would-be Hindu allies were far from being serious. Few indeed trusted him, and his future intention was suspected by all. There could not be an agreement even on the name of the proposed new state. In disgust and frustration, he at last informed the viceroy about the failure of his attempt saying: 'The Hindus want to browbeat me to accept a Socialist Republic. . . . If I reject this as indeed I must, Mr Sarat Bose walks out, and Mr Kiran Sankar Roy is too weak to fight the Hindus on the score of partition.'⁴⁵

Having abandoned his hope for a sovereign united Bengal, he started arguing for the allotment of Calcutta to East Bengal. It would be criminally unfair if the city was not given to the Muslim zone, he pleaded, since on one side it touched the sub-division of Baraset where the Muslims were in a majority, and since there was no natural dividing line as a frontier other than the river Hooghly between the Hindu zone and the Muslim zone. If that was not possible, his last prayer was 'Calcutta and the industrial areas round about it should be made into a free international zone'.⁴⁶

Amazing though, even after Suhrawardy gave up hope of an independent Bengal, Mountbatten did not. The plan for India's partition lay in his hand, and, till the final hour, he clung to his belief that he could do something in that respect in the interest of Britain. Before the viceroy left for London to finalize the plan, Nehru communicated to him the Congress High Command's definite decision that it would neither agree to an independent Bengal nor would it permit the Bengal Congress to support it. Still apprehensive of what the viceroy could do at the very last moment, while in London, Nehru gave an interview to the *News Chronicle* on 27 May to express the emphatic view that 'Congress could agree to Bengal remaining united only if it remained in the Union of India.' Mountbatten was obliged to concede defeat, and the next day, the British Cabinet Committee concluded its decision on Bengal with the following words:

The Viceroy was afraid that, in view of this development [Nehru's declaration], the prospects of saving the unity of Bengal and securing its establishment as a third Dominion in India had been gravely prejudiced; indeed, he thought that, if Pandit Nehru had completely committed himself, the only means by which the partition of Bengal could be avoided would be by Mr. Jinnah's abandonment of his claim to the Province for Pakistan and by its acceptance of a position, similar to that of an Indian State, of quasi independence in close relationship with one or the other of the Dominion Governments. If it proved impossible to avoid the partition of the Province, the future of Eastern Bengal would present very difficult problems, since it was clearly not a viable unit.⁴⁷

Bengal's future, thus, was shadowed by partition when the Mountbatten Plan was taking its final shape. It was a victory for the Congress and a defeat for the League. It also marked a retreat of the British from their sinister design to break India into three parts — Hindustan, Pakistan, and Banglasthan.

The Punjab

The problem of the Punjab was somewhat more complex than that of Bengal for three main reasons. Firstly, whereas Bengal had only two

major communities, Hindus and Muslims, the Punjab had a third powerful population element, the Sikhs. Secondly, whereas Bengal was governed by a League government, the Punjab was under the governor's rule, putting the British thereby in a more delicate situation in those last months of their rule. Finally, the feeling of religious animosity in the Punjab between the Muslims and the non-Muslims had taken a much more violent form there than in Bengal.

It was in Lahore in the Punjab that the Pakistan Resolution had been adopted in 1940, with the letter *P* of the word Pakistan standing for the Punjab. That province, for several reasons, was regarded by the League as the core of the proposed Pakistan, although the composition of its population as well as the population distribution in the province were not favourable to the League's aspirations. The British had conquered the Punjab from the Sikhs and had paid special attention to the development of this prosperous and strategically situated area ever since its conquest. Whether by accident or deliberately, it was the Sikh community which received the maximum attention of the British and which derived immense benefits, even though they constituted less than twenty per cent of the Punjab population. They became the owners of the canal-irrigated fertile lands in western Punjab, and owned large landed estates in the eastern half, and were employed in the British Indian Army in large number. They were prosperous and industrious, and played their part in the freedom struggle with patriotic fervour. It was the tragedy of the Sikhs that they lived scattered all over the province, but did not constitute a majority in any single district. Proud of having been the former rulers of the Punjab and confined to that land ever since their emergence as a distinct religious community, they regarded the Punjab as their homeland. The issue of Pakistan naturally came as a threat to all the Sikhs, but with their trust in the Congress and in their own organizations, they remained hopeful that the crisis would pass.

The Hindus of the Punjab were much more numerous than the Sikhs. As a sturdy and tenacious people, economically resourceful and advanced in trade, commerce, education and politics, they also enjoyed a situational advantage, being a numerical majority in the eastern portions of the province.

Yet, without taking into consideration the demographic picture of the Hindu-Sikh existence, the Muslim League thought of the Punjab as the heart of Pakistan because the Muslims constituted an overall majority of the entire population within the boundaries of the province as demarcated by the British for administrative purposes.

When, ultimately, the establishment of Pakistan seemed inevitable, the Congress High Command examined and analysed the population

position in the province. The Punjab contained 29 districts grouped into 5 Divisions, Multan, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Jullundur and Ambala. At the time under review, the total population was 28.4 million, of which 16.2 million were Muslims, and 12.2 million were Hindus and Sikhs. Of the five divisions, Multan and Rawalpindi were overwhelmingly Muslim with 9 million Muslims as against 2 million non-Muslims, though the Sikhs in those regions possessed considerable economic interests. In the Lahore Division, there were 4 million Muslims as against 3 million Hindus and Sikhs, thus making the area potentially problematic. Added to this, it included the Sikh Holy City of Amritsar, while in the Amritsar District itself the Muslims were in the minority. The Sikhs in that division enjoyed high property status both in land and trade, and though a mixed area of Muslims and non-Muslims, it was under the economic hegemony of the latter in every respect.

The two remaining divisions, Jullundur and Ambala, were predominantly Hindu-Sikh areas with 3 million Muslims as against 7 million non-Muslims. Not a single district of these two Divisions possessed a Muslim majority.

In view of this population position, it was considered absurd in nationalist quarters that Jinnah should claim the whole of the Punjab for his Muslim State. The Congress was not going to agree that the League, on behalf of 16.2 million Muslims, could claim the right to decide the future of 12.2 million non-Muslims. To counteract the League demand, therefore, the Congress decided to press for the partition of the Punjab as the only solution to the problem.

With the fall of the coalition government, and the imposition of the governor's rule, when communal civil war overcame Punjab, a decision about the future of the province demanded the urgent attention of all concerned. The Governor of the Punjab, Evan Meredith Jenkins, could not conceive of a partition because of the integrated economic life of the Punjabi people, as well as for the interwoven composition of the population in the most vulnerable areas. A major political decision at the highest level, irrespective of its consequences, became the urgent need of the hour, when the religious battle-cry for a relentless struggle resounded in every corner of the province.

The Congress resolution demanding partition naturally had the support of the Punjabi Hindus. But, while welcoming the Congress decision on behalf of the Sikhs, Master Tara Singh expressed his anxieties about the future of the Sikh areas, and declared:

The Congress had not defined the scheme of partition. The Sikhs will be glad if the Muslim League accept the principle and concede the Sikh demand of forming districts into a separate province in which the Sikhs and

Hindus are given as much land as they possess at present. We cannot tolerate a division in which predominantly Sikh districts were partitioned.⁴⁸

It became more and more apparent that the Sikh leadership faced the worst possible dilemma for the obvious reason that, while Pakistan was totally unacceptable, any form of partition would prove harmful to the Sikhs, scattered as they were all over the province.

Sardar Baldev Singh, who, like Khizar Hayat Khan and many other eminent Muslim leaders, had felt that a coalition government of the Unionist Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, could provide the best form of government for that province, was most unhappy when the League brought down the popular inter-communal government by 'sheer hooliganism of the vilest type', and came to believe that the 'only solution is a division of the Punjab and the creation of a new Province embracing the contiguous areas where non-Muslims form a clear majority as a whole and have larger property interests.'⁴⁹ But, he could offer no solution to the problem of the Sikhs in the canal colonies in western Punjab in the proposed division according to majority and minority areas.

Meanwhile, the administration in the province had fallen to pieces as communal strife intensified. The majority of Muslim officers and police men would not take action against the mobs of their coreligionists who went on the rampage for fear of their own safety after the birth of Pakistan. The senior British officers in the administration and in the police force, too, showed their indifference towards the law and order situation, perhaps because their own days were numbered in India. On one occasion, referring to their callousness, one of their own cadre, but a known well-wisher of the doomed province, Penderel Moon, commented:

A generation earlier, when there had been a wave of lawlessness in the Punjab directed against the British, Brigadier-General Dyer had poured 1,650 rounds into a mob in Amritsar, killing 600-700 and wounding over 1,000; he had ceased firing only when his ammunition was exhausted. . . . Now exactly the opposite mistake was made. For over twenty-four hours riotous mobs were allowed to rage through this great commercial city unchallenged and unchecked. The finest bazaars were burnt to the ground without a shot being fired to disperse the incendiaries.⁵⁰

'What do we care — we are going anyhow', remarked a British Officer in high authority when his attention was drawn to the burning of a large part of a town. 'That bloody Attlee is ruining everything', commented another officer referring to the British Prime Minister's decision to withdraw from India.⁵¹ An attitude such as this from those on whose hands rested the government of the province under governor's rule spelt ill of the future. The governor found it impossible to withdraw Section 93

while the League was not prepared to tolerate any form of Muslim-Hindu-Sikh ministry, and the non-Muslims were furiously against any form of a purely Muslim League government. Perplexed at what was going on, Governor Jenkins first thought of either an agreed partition of the Punjab between the Muslims and the non-Muslims, or, a united Punjab with its existing boundaries under a constitution acceptable to all communities. On a subsequent thought, he felt that an agreed partition was impossible when tempers ran high, and a united Punjab under a separate constitution was a negation of Pakistan and therefore unacceptable to Jinnah. The only solution, as he came to believe in course of time, could be an imposition of partition by force, although a terrible job, requiring a lot of troops. Information reached Mountbatten from army sources that the Sikhs and the Muslims were arming themselves for a bloody clash which it was almost impossible to avoid.

'I regarded the Punjab as a microcosm of the Indian problem, since the same difficulty of large minorities living in the same area was repeated here as in India as a whole,' Mountbatten told the League leader Ghazanfar Ali Khan, while thinking of a solution in terms of Pakistan *vis-à-vis* partition of the Punjab.

Much depended on how the Congress took up the problem and tackled it. Bent on partition, the Hindu leaders like Thakur Das Bhargava, Hans Raj, Dewan Chaman Lal, with several others, presented to Nehru their demand that 'the only way out of the present deadlock is to partition the Punjab into two Provinces', and requested him to take up the matter in the Interim Government for decision. Being members of the central legislature from the Punjab, their considered opinion carried constitutional weight. At the same time, early in April, the members of the Punjab Assembly Panthic Party announced their opinion that 'Division of the Punjab is the only remedy. We have unanimously expressed our agreement on it.'⁵² Moves like these strengthened the hands of the Congress High Command in pressing the viceroy to accept a division of the Punjab.

Mountbatten wanted to take time to work out the feasibility of partition in view of the complexities involved. His priority concern was how to restore a semblance of order before arriving at a negotiated settlement. But when he suggested to Sardar Baldev Singh that the Sikh leaders might issue an appeal to their community to cease hostilities, the Defence Member of the Interim Government alarmed the viceroy with the information that 'the situation in the Punjab was particularly explosive, since they had a million soldiers of the three communities who had recently been demobilised in the area, and who were spoiling for trouble.'⁵³ Within the next few days, Field Marshal Auchinleck drew the attention of the viceroy to an even more serious development in the

context of the Punjab situation. If the Muslims and non-Muslims there continued fighting, the communal virus was sure to affect the Indian Army. According to Auchinleck, 'the Muslim League would ensure this if they did not get their way'. The hold of the British officers on the Army was rapidly slackening because of their impending departure about which Indian soldiers were fully conscious. The officers themselves were 'going round their men painting gloomy pictures of what would happen after the British left'. While the Army was in that shape, the Field Marshal anticipated grave disturbances when the partition came. He feared that, 'If the Punjab were split there would be trouble with the Muslim minority in the Eastern Punjab who would have nothing to look forward to. If the Sikhs took action against them they were likely to appeal immediately to the Muslim majority in the Western Punjab and that indeed would lead to civil war.'⁵⁴

The possible rift in the Army and the danger of civil war in the case of partition of the province caused serious anxiety to the viceroy. Yet, irrespective of what might come, he could not go against the logic of partition as advanced by the Congress. He thought of the Sikhs with a sense of sympathy, but the latter had themselves come forward to demand partition as Pakistan was anathema to every Sikh. On 14 April, the Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal adopted a resolution at Amritsar stating:

Shiromani Akali Dal notes with satisfaction that the Nationalist Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab have fully agreed to the partition of the Punjab. Recent barbarities of the Pakistani Muslims on the Hindus and Sikhs of the Punjab have left no other solution of the communal tangle except the partition of the Punjab.⁵⁵

The viceroy discussed the Sikh-Hindu demands with the governor and the latter explained to him which areas were 'unquestionably to go to the Muslim League and which unquestionably to go to the Congress', pointing out at the same time how the areas around Lahore were the most disputed. The governor wanted four divisions of the army to avoid a full-scale civil war. On 18 April, Master Tara Singh, Sardar Kartar Singh and Sardar Baldev Singh met Mountbatten to tell him that 'they would never again be able to live in peace and harmony with Muslims, and would accept nothing that would put them under their domination'.⁵⁶

The Congress High Command, meanwhile, received the final decision of the non-Muslim portion of the Punjab Legislature in respect of the future of their province. On 21 April, Nehru got a joint submission from Bhim Sen Sachar and Sardar Swaran Singh, representing the policy of the Punjab Congress Assembly Party and the Panthic Assembly Party of the Punjab. It said:

The last so-called Civil Disobedience Movement of the Punjab Muslim League was an open invitation to lawlessness and disorder. . . . The resignation of the Coalition Ministry was utilised to make the Muslim masses believe that the Pakistan had been achieved, and the day for which the Muslim League was preparing them had arrived. Accordingly, they started a regular 'Jihad' (Holy War) against Hindus and indulged in murder, loot, arson, rape, religious conversions, and forcible marriages. During this conflagration thousands have been killed and much larger number have become homeless and penniless. . . . We cannot submit to be ruled by those who have committed or caused to be committed these inhuman atrocities in the Punjab and therefore demand that immediate steps be taken to divide the Punjab into two, and if necessary three autonomous provinces.⁵⁷

In their suggestion for three autonomous provinces, Sachar and Swaran Singh meant the Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions less Montgomery for the Muslims; the Jullundur and Ambala Divisions for the non-Muslims; and the Lahore Division with Montgomery district as a Central Province governed by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs jointly. This Central Province could be finally partitioned between western and eastern halves of the Punjab after the details were worked out by a boundary commission.

When partition was finally accepted by the Congress as the least evil of all solutions, the hope to preserve the unity of the province still lingered in some minds. For example, the fallen premier, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan, made an appeal on 2 May: 'I am convinced that a division of the province would prove extremely detrimental to the interests of all communities and classes in the province, and would reverse the process of progressive, beneficent development which had been carried on in the province during the last quarter of a century.'⁵⁸ Laudable though these sentiments were, the proposal for unity could be differently interpreted by the League and the Congress — the former as a united Punjab in Pakistan, and the latter as the same, but in Hindustan.

Though too late, Mountbatten for a moment toyed with the idea of an independent Punjab as he was doing in regard to Bengal, forgetting that while there could be a Pakistan without Bengal, there could be none without the Punjab or a part of it. On 3 May, he asked Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, who was herself a Punjabi and strongly opposed to partition, 'whether an offer of independence to the Punjab would save its unity'. She felt that it might be a solution and said that she would recommend it to Gandhi.⁵⁹ The same day the viceroy discussed the subject with Khizar Hayat Khan, telling him that, though he was himself 'violently opposed to partition', the leaders showed absolutely no sign of getting together and therefore partition was getting inevitable. Khizar described how any vivisection would be disastrous and suicidal and said that 'the Punjab for the Punjabis used to be the cry and that he was still in favour of it'.

The viceroy thereupon wanted to be enlightened on whether 'he would prefer the will of the people being obtained by a referendum or the means laid down in the plan'.⁶⁰ The Unionist leader, however, did not come forward with any strong conviction in fear of the League and of the Sikhs, and having no great following of his own. Mountbatten next turned to the veteran League leader of the Punjab, Ghazanfar Ali Khan, to sell him the prospect of a united independent Punjab. But, he, too, did not express any hope in the success of the proposal.

The hope of rousing Punjabi sentiment for a united Punjab when a civil war had already been raging for so long was an illusion. The viceroy failed to understand that the Hindus and Sikhs would never accept it, for the simple reason that 'independent Punjab' would go over to Pakistan soon after the British withdrawal by virtue of its Muslim majority. Had Mountbatten succeeded in keeping the province united as an independent Panjabistan, he would have only served the purpose of Jinnah. The Congress would never have accepted his proposal, as they did not in case of Bengal.

The viceroy, thus, went ahead to prepare his plan for partition knowing that it 'would cut the Sikhs almost exactly into two halves — 18 lakhs on the one side: 20 lakhs on the other'. A partition, based entirely on the basis of population majorities in various districts, was to give 17 districts to the Muslims and 12 to the non-Muslims.

It may be noted here that the British were going to divide India to create a separate homeland for the Muslims, taking advantage of the religious differences between the two major communities to which their own contribution was substantial. Despite the Congress creed of national unity and Gandhi's determination to keep India united, historical developments finally culminated in the triumph of communalism. It was not unnatural, therefore, that there was some talk about a separate homeland for the Sikhs in some quarters, to counteract the demand for Pakistan. The British, too, with their soft corner for the Sikhs for their long and valiant services in the British-Indian Army, considered the feasibility of a separate Sikh state once the creation of a Muslim state became a certainty. Both the great political parties in Britain were sympathetic towards the Sikhs in this regard, but the numerical position of the community discouraged the home authorities from taking up such a proposition for worthwhile attention. Finally, therefore, early in May, when various points of the proposed plan were under the British cabinet's scrutiny, the secretary of state informed the viceroy:

I suppose the basic fact of the situation is that the Sikhs have an exaggerated idea of their proper status in the future set-up. No doubt this is due partly to their historical position as the rulers of the Punjab, partly to the rather flattering treatment they have received from us as one of the great

martial races of India, and partly to the fact that they consider that they have contributed out of proportion to their numbers to the economic wealth of the Punjab. On the other hand, they are a community numbering only some 6 millions out of nearly 400 millions and in the Punjab itself they number only 4 millions among 28 millions. On any democratic basis, therefore, they must definitely be regarded as a minority (and not even as a 'major' minority). Owing to the fact that in no single district of the Punjab do they constitute a majority of the population, it is out of the question to meet their claims by setting up a separate Sikh State.⁶¹

Be that as may, with partition of the Punjab assured, the Congress and the Sikhs awaited the plan with a sense of relief.

The North West Frontier Province

The Congress demanded the partition of the Punjab and Bengal which, as Jinnah described it, would render Pakistan moth-eaten and truncated. The British accepted the demand as they had to. In case of the Frontier Province, the question of partition did not arise. It was a near-totally Muslim-majority province, having a small minority of Hindus and Sikhs constituting only 7 per cent of the population. To the Muslim League, the province was indispensable for future Pakistan. According to the Congress, its Pathan population, by and large, stood for a united India and the Congress, and not for Pakistan. The acute and subtle diplomacy on part of the last viceroy finally decided the fate of the Frontier, the rationality of which has since been doubted and debated.

The general elections of 1945 were fought in that province on the issue of Pakistan, when the Muslim League explained to the people the merits of an independent Islamic state. But the Pathans were not swayed by the slogan of 'Islam in Danger' since Islam was never in danger in that purely Muslim province. Of pure Muslim stock, the brave Pathans of that strategically situated region were under the spell of Indian nationalism, with an eagerness to enjoy the fruits of independence as part of a vast and prosperous subcontinent. The proposed Pakistan, confined to a small territory, did not have much appeal for them. Under the influence of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Khudai Khidmatgars, the people were on the side of the Congress, playing their admirable role in the freedom struggle. To detach them from the national mainstream proved no easy task for the League.

The Congress won 30 seats as against 17 of the League, and 2 other seats were won by non-League Muslims, and 1 by an Akali Sikh. Khan Sahib, half-brother of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, formed a Congress Ministry and proved himself one of the ablest among the Congress Chief Ministers of India. Everything went in favour of the Congress till the British declaration on the transfer of power suddenly destabilised the entire situation.

For Jinnah and the Muslim League, there could be no Pakistan without the Frontier Province, but the province was not likely to join Pakistan as long as a Congress government remained in power. Fearful of the Frontier Gandhi's hold on the Pathan masses, and Khan Sahib's hold on the administration, Jinnah decided to launch a violent movement to bring down the Congress government and win over the Frontier Muslims. Two factors went in his favour in that campaign. The Frontier Governor, Olaf Kirkpatrick Caroe, was openly hostile towards the Congress members in the Interim Government, particularly Nehru, and was bitterly against his own Congress Premier and against Ghaffar Khan. His tacit support for the League movement was a boon to Jinnah, and ultimately went a long way in influencing the Frontier masses in favour of Pakistan. Secondly, it was the geographical situation of the province which gave the League a propaganda lever to tell the people that, with either the whole of the Punjab or its western half opting for Pakistan, the Frontier Province would find itself physically separated from the rest of India, and therefore their future lay only with Pakistan.

Nehru, as a member of the Interim Government and in charge of External Affairs, which included Tribal Areas, had felt convinced of Caroe's antipathy towards himself and the Frontier Congress during his brief visit to Malakand in October 1946. 'The Congress represents', he gave a timely instruction to the Governor, 'a much more powerful urge for political and social change and is, therefore, disliked. Almost everywhere in India it has been obvious that Governors and others favour the Muslim League as against the Congress. Some of them do it inadvertently and almost unconsciously; others do it deliberately and obviously and sometimes even twist the law to this end.'⁶² But Caroe was not a man to give up his partisan attitude. Nehru was obliged to present a 'shocking report' about him to Mountbatten when his conduct towards the Khan Sahib Ministry could no longer be condoned. And Gandhi himself met the viceroy on 4 April 1947 with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan to discuss the problem when the League agitation seemed to be going out of control. The Frontier Gandhi made a very forthright denunciation of the governor and his officials, particularly of the officers dealing with the tribes. He accused Caroe of being pro-League and of trying to make the administration of Khan Sahib as difficult as possible. The subordinate British officials of the Indian Civil Service followed the governor's example. The frontier tribes were completely under the control of the British political officers and invariably acted as directed by them. 'The fact remains', noted Mountbatten, 'that this remarkable old man is firmly convinced that Sir Olaf Caroe and all his officers are intensely pro-League and are doing their best to undermine the position of the Congress on the Frontier.'⁶³ Departing from official etiquette, the viceroy enquired from the British chief secretary of the province about Caroe's

conduct and, Colonel de la Fargue, the chief secretary, confirmed that 'although the Governor was a man with great knowledge of the Frontier, he was in fact biased against his Congress Government, and had lost the confidence of all fair-minded people in the Province.'

The viceroy was placed in a delicate situation. To remove a British governor from office on complaints from Congress leaders, however great, was to establish a bad precedent even in those last days of the Raj. To keep him in office when his role was so partisan was to invite suspicion about British impartiality at the time of the transfer of power. The chief secretary himself was of the frank opinion that Caroe's 'continuation in office was in fact a menace to British prestige'.⁶⁴

The governor in the meanwhile was advancing his view that the Frontier Province required another general election for a fresh mandate from the people on whether the Congress Government should continue in power. But Khan Sahib resisted such a move on the ground that a duly elected and legally constituted ministry had no reason to face the electorate afresh simply because an unconstitutional agitation had been started by the League. He was confident of facing the agitation since the people were with him. It was on this issue that the governor and the premier began to differ widely.

The viceroy discussed this with the Frontier chief secretary in order to ascertain the prospect of the Congress and the League in case a fresh election was decided upon in view of the Muslim League mass agitation. Giving his own opinion of Khan Sahib as 'absolutely first class', the chief secretary said that 'a free clean election in the Frontier province would be more likely to return Congress to power than the League' and that 'even with a Section 93 Government, he thought that an election would return Congress to power'.⁶⁵

The future of the Frontier clearly rested on the viceroy and the way he would steer his policy. The hold of the Congress on the population could not be doubted. Unfortunately for the League, they did not possess eminent Pathan leaders of the stature of the Khan Brothers. They did not also possess an organization like the Red Shirts to mobilize mass opinion in favour of Pakistan. The Frontier was represented in the Constituent Assembly by persons in favour of joining the Indian Union. Everything was in favour of the Congress, and the overall political and constitutional position of the province made the High Command somewhat confident of retaining it in Indian Union. But, the viceroy began to think on different lines. With the provision for the partition of Bengal and the Punjab in his prospective plan, he could not think of a viable Pakistan without the Frontier Province included in it. Jinnah would never agree to forego the Frontier, and the Mountbatten mission would end in futility if the League was denied its claim to that area. This

consideration became the motive force behind Mountbatten's drastic bid to discover a way to hand over the Frontier to Pakistan.

Jinnah was seldom given to understand by the viceroy that his chances of getting the Frontier Province were doubtful because of Congress strength there. With Caroe in alliance and Mountbatten silent, the League intensified its struggle against the Congress Ministry in total disregard of all norms of political behaviour. If an unconstitutional agitation in the Punjab could bring down a constitutionally established popular government, the same could be enacted in the Frontier, without fear or restraint. In the Punjab, there was a formidable Hindu-Sikh population to oppose the League, but yet the coalition government fell because of wanton violence and lawlessness. In the Frontier, there were no non-Muslim elements to fight the League, and therefore the path before the League was clear in its determined fight against the government. There was yet another advantage for the League. The cult of non-violence which the Congress professed and the Red Shirts followed gave the League free scope to carry on its destructive agitation unopposed. The Congress government, no doubt, took action to stop lawlessness, but that was not enough to put an end to a motivated movement which the League intended to prolong till Pakistan was achieved.

There was an Action Committee of the Muslim League which functioned in the light of its declared opinion that

The N.W.F. Province Government had adopted such repressive and oppressive methods in the province against their political opponents that normal political life had become impossible for the people and it was as a protest against this that the Mussalmans of the N.W.F. Province were forced to resort to peaceful civil disobedience to vindicate their rights. The Committee of Action very strongly condemn the N.W.F. Province's Government in creating such circumstances in the Province as are bound to bring about a clash between the Red Shirts and other Muslims.⁶⁶

The Red Shirts, of course, true to their adherence to Gandhian non-violence, did not come forward for a clash, but the League, in their guise as civil resisters, enjoyed a free hand to indulge in acts of violence against the negligible minority of Sikhs and Hindus. While Premier Khan Sahib in his 'genuine and righteous hatred for the acts of communal passion' tried to utilize the law-enforcing machinery, the governor complained to the viceroy: 'Many of my officers, as well as the police, are not far off a breakdown. Perhaps what worries them more than the strain of having to face excited crowds day after day is the knowledge that, whatever they do and however loyally they work, they will be accused and abused for being Leaguers at heart.'⁶⁷

The Viceroy in no time made up his mind that the Frontier Province demanded a different solution. Knowing that two great provinces, the Punjab and Bengal, were to be partitioned, not through a reference to the people but by the will of the existing legislators in their respective assemblies, he thought of obtaining 'the real views of the people of the North-West Frontier Province' regarding the future of that province. Before declaring a decision to that effect, Mountbatten resorted to diplomacy. He persuaded Jinnah to believe that, if the agitations continued, any decision in his favour 'would become a question of yielding to force', and entered upon a secret deal with him that he would fathom the Pathan sentiment himself by paying a visit to the Frontier Province. Jinnah thereupon issued instruction to his followers on 23 April to maintain peace assuring them that 'the Viceroy would give justice'.

'But what injustices had been there,' Patel asked Mountbatten after apprehending some hidden move. Presenting a picture of what the prominent Leaguers like Abdur Rab Nishtar and Malik Firoz Khan Noon were doing in Peshawar to bring down the Congress ministry, the Sardar offered himself as a surety for Congress conduct saying that he would be personally responsible if any violence could be shown to have been caused by the Congress. 'But,' he warned, 'unless the Muslim League withdrew their Direct Action threat, there would be a disaster.'⁶⁸

On Mountbatten's plea to Liaquat, Ghazanfar and Nishtar that he would personally visit Peshawar and that, therefore, the League should suspend all their lawless activities, the League leaders devoted themselves to organizing a massive popular demonstration before the viceroy to convince him of the Pathan feeling in favour of Pakistan. On 28 April 1947, Mountbatten flew to Peshawar. About fifty thousand men and women had been brought out by the League and collected together over a vast park to raise slogan for Pakistan. Though it was a partisan rally organized by his opponents, Khan Sahib 'agreed that His Excellency should go himself to the crowd for a few minutes' and show himself up from the top of the nearby railway embankment.⁶⁹ The viceroy had come ostensibly for that purpose, and as he appeared before the demonstrators and waved to them, he was greeted with cries of 'Pakistan Zindabad' and 'Mountbatten Zindabad'. Mountbatten felt that he had assessed the mood of the Pathan race.

It was a superb tactical move, but devoid of any norm or principle of political impartiality on part of the viceroy. The mass rally was a prearranged show. The Frontier Congress and the Red Shirts wanted to organize a more impressive counter-demonstration to raise slogans in favour of India, but Congress premier dismissed the idea in order to avoid a direct clash between the opposite groups. Law and order was his responsibility when the viceroy himself was on the scene, and

Khan Sahib could not have permitted a nationalist rally to counteract the League's show of strength. Mountbatten understood the delicate position in which the premier was placed, but was satisfied that his own purpose had been well served.

On return from the rally, when the Viceroy betrayed his intentions by his remarks on how he had understood the popular mood, Khan Sahib understood the meaning of his visit and tried to counter his design by suggesting the formation of a separate Pathanistan in case the viceroy wanted the Frontier Province to break away from the rest of India. 'If you destroy the Pathan nation,' he cautioned, 'terrible things will happen.' In the face of the governor, the premier complained that the League represented the privileged classes of the Khans, not of the poor Pathans, and enjoyed official sympathy in their lawless campaign, but Mountbatten was not prepared to heed his pleadings. And, there in Peshawar, he disclosed his decision about the fate of the Frontier by informing the governor and the premier that 'I want to transfer power in terms of the will of the people. Ideally I would have a plebiscite here, but there is no time.'⁷⁰ There was no time for plebiscite before the plan was finalized, but his approach indicated that he wanted to include a provision for a plebiscite in the plan.

The Viceroy worked on his strategy without giving the Congress time to react. Immediately on return from the Frontier, he sent Ismay and Abell to London with the draft of the plan and wrote to the secretary of state on 1 May about his decision to hold a referendum in the Frontier. It is surprising that Jinnah at that stage could not grasp the merit of a referendum and went on persisting that the Congress ministry be removed and a fresh election be held to the legislature. It was for the viceroy to carry to his mind the real implication of a referendum. 'As a result of your visit to the Frontier Province are you satisfied there is a case for immediate dissolution of the Government?' Jinnah asked Mountbatten. 'No, definitely no,' replied the Viceroy, 'any election will take place solely on the issue of Pakistan or Hindustan.'⁷¹ Jinnah was haunted by the fear that, as long as the Khan Sahib Government remained in office, any election on the issue of Pakistan or Hindustan was likely to go in favour of the Congress, and therefore he could depend only on his continuing agitation to achieve his goal. 'If the Khan Sahib administration was allowed to continue,' he told the viceroy, 'the Congress would provoke conditions that would cause violence and that if he were to call off the campaign he would be reduced to dust in the eyes of his followers.'⁷²

The viceroy, on the other hand, knew that a dismissal of the Congress Ministry would be an act of impropriety and invite total resistance from the Congress High Command on constitutional grounds. He was equal-

ly certain that the Congress would not settle the issue by violent methods as the League apprehended. More than that, a referendum under British supervision while Khan Sahib remained in power would go to the definite advantage of the League for the reason that the Congress government would be responsible for law and order while the referendum would be conducted by another agency and thus the Frontier Congressmen would be neutralized in their hostility to the Muslim League campaign for Pakistan. The viceroy was sure that the Congress would be placed in a tight corner while the League would reap the harvest.

Without further delay, Mountbatten intimated his final decision to the secretary of state on 3 May saying:

The main advantages of such a referendum would appear to be: (a) It would be a far better way of finding out the will of the people and of removing weightage than under the system at present envisaged in the draft announcement whereby the decision is left in the hands of three persons (Members of Constituent Assembly); (b) the issue (Pakistan or Hindustan) would be straightforward and readily understood by the people; (c) it would not involve a great loss of time or greatly increased administrative arrangements.⁷³

When the viceroy abruptly but finally decided in favour of referendum, the Congress Working Committee demanded that three alternatives should be presented to the people of the Frontier Province to vote upon: joining the Indian Unions, joining Pakistan, or becoming an independent territory.⁷⁴ But Mountbatten proceeded to finalize his plan with the policy of setting up 'his own machinery and hold a referendum in the Province on the simple issue of Hindustan or Pakistan'.

The Frontier Congress felt greatly upset at the way the viceroy worked. They could now realize the implication of his visit to Peshawar and of the organized demonstration before him. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan held the governor chiefly responsible for the conspiracy and accused him of planning a civil war. Caroe, on his part, blamed him for organizing a new armed branch of the Red Shirts. The Congress High Command as well as the Frontier Congress demanded the governor's immediate removal to save the province from further trouble. Two eminent Congress leaders, Acharya Jugal Kishore and Dewan Chaman Lal, in the meantime, conducted an enquiry into the situation there and submitted their view that the governor must be recalled. Early in May, they narrated their findings and concluded:

There is no doubt that the adherents of the Muslim League have utilised these atrocious methods with the primary object of making it impossible for

the Ministry to function nor have we any doubt that what we may call the Governor's party has given direct or indirect encouragement to the law-breakers. Since the Muslim League launched its campaign hundreds of murders have been committed, hundreds of shops and houses burnt or gutted and scores of people in various localities forcibly converted.⁷⁵

Pointing to the inflammable situation in the Frontier Province, Nehru pleaded with the viceroy that neither referendum nor election should take place 'until the Constituent Assembly had drafted at any rate the essentials of a constitution'. The viceroy argued that this would cause inordinate delay and, referring to Caroe's views, said 'unless an announcement was included in the plan that an election or referendum would be held in the near future he foresaw a real flare-up throughout the Province'. Suspecting that the Congress High Command might itself connive at disorders to forestall his decision, Mountbatten requested the secretary of state on 8 May that 'HMG should insist on a referendum in the NWFP run by the Governor-General . . . so that a clear issue may be put before the voters; and that a statement to this effect should form part of the plan.'⁷⁶

In London, by that time, the preliminary draft of the plan was under the active consideration of the Cabinet. In India, the viceroy was eagerly awaiting the outcome of the London discussions, keeping himself ready for the next crucial move.

4. The Mountbatten Plan

By the end of April 1947, after an almost ceaseless exercise lasting a month, the British as well as the Indian leaders were at last nearing some kind of a solution to the continuing crisis. By its nature, the solution did not bring any real happiness to any of its authors. To Gandhi, it was even revolting. But when the blood of the innocent flowed endlessly and there were no means to check its tide except an evil compromise, the parties had had to agree to it helplessly though reluctantly. Everybody knew that more blood would flow with the coming of that solution, but it was also hoped that the tide would ebb in course of time.

On 2 May 1947, as already mentioned, the viceroy sent his chief of staff, Lord Ismay, and his private secretary, George Abell, to London with the preliminary draft of his plan. Every attempt was made to keep the contents confidential, but everything leaked out almost instantly. From that time, till the plan was at last accepted and announced a month later, hopes and fears continued to dominate the mind of millions, while the leaders remained engaged in their final fateful struggle to guard their respective interests.

The partition of the country as also of the two provinces having

become a settled fact, the newspapers were flooded with speculations about the nature of the operation to follow. The atmosphere became tense as emotions ran high. The viceroy visualized dangerous trends towards violence if the press indulged in inciting fears. The plan itself was also likely to run into disaster if the affected areas went up in flames. Sensing his trouble and anticipating the spread of violence, Gandhi made one of the noblest of gestures to Mountbatten by using words of praise in his favour and asking the press to restrain itself.

It is highly improper [declared the Mahatma on 3 May] that newspapers should indulge in such speculation. They should let the Viceroy himself make a public announcement about what he intends doing. And why should any surmises be made even about discussions at the Working Committee meeting? . . . The British have sent here a nice man from amongst them. He has come to save Britain's honour. He has been acting with the same good intention with which he has been sent. Then, what right do we have to give publicity to his actions without consulting him? What right does anyone have to wheedle information out of everybody by sweet words, draw inferences from here and there and then publish them in the paper?⁷⁷

Gandhi advised reason and decency for sake of peace.

Not to speak of the Congress press which reacted to the danger of partition, the provisions of the proposed plan were not even viewed with favour in a portion of the British Press. 'Pakistan is a very high price to pay for peace — or at least avoidance of civil war,' commented the *Manchester Guardian* on 3 May.⁷⁸ Various suggestions and comments were put forward. Admitting that there could be serious objections to any form of solution, it was felt nonetheless that the simplest solution would have been to transfer powers and responsibility to Nehru's Government, making it responsible to the Constituent Assembly and leaving it to settle with the Muslim League the question of partition or no partition.

While public opinion in India and Britain went on ventilating itself in numerous ways, the viceroy with V.P. Menon and Eric Mievile proceeded to the quieter retreat of Simla on 7 May to receive there the verdict of the British Cabinet on his proposals. In his timely prudence he requested Nehru and Krishna Menon to be with him at Simla to discuss the Cabinet decision and to prepare the final draft thereafter. Nehru and Menon reached Simla on 8 May.

That very day, on his train to Patna, Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter to Mountbatten giving his principled advice once again that

whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of the first magnitude for the British to be a party in any way whatsoever to the

division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal, as a result of understanding between the parties or of an armed conflict which according to Quaid-e-Azam is taboo. Protection of minorities can be guaranteed by establishing a court of arbitration in the event of difference of opinion among contending parties.⁷⁹

His other suggestions included: an Interim Government on a party basis, composed of either Congressmen or Muslim League men, since the existing dual control and lack of team spirit harmed the country; referendum in the Frontier Province was dangerous at that stage and the viceroy should have to deal with the existing material; partition of the Punjab and Bengal was wrong in every case and could come up for consideration under mutual agreement after British withdrawal; whilst the British power functioned in India, it should be responsible for the preservation of peace; and, the Constituent Assembly should have to provide for the governance even of that part of India which was not represented owing to the absence of the Muslim League members.

Gandhi presented his considered opinion about the princely States saying:

The intransmissibility of paramountcy is a vicious doctrine, if it means that they [the States] can become sovereign and a menace for independent India. All the power wherever exercised by the British in India must automatically descend to the successor. Thus the people of the States become as much part of independent India as the people of British India. The present Princes are puppets created or tolerated for the upkeep and prestige of the British Power. The unchecked powers exercised by them over their people is probably the worst blot on the British Crown. The Princes under the new regime can exercise only such powers as trustees can and as can be given to them by the Constituent Assembly.⁸⁰

The Congress High Command felt greatly perturbed over the gravity of the communal situation when the League raised private armies in Bengal, the Punjab and the Frontier Provinces to create turmoil. The plan was about to be finalized. The administration stood demoralized in many parts of the country. An agitated Patel charged the British in an interview to the Associated Press of America at New Delhi on 9 May that by 'remaining neutral, but holding power' they were propagating civil war. He demanded that the viceroy stand aside and not interfere, and transfer power to the central government immediately. With that, as he declared:

Firstly, there would be peace in the country within a week. Those who commit acts of violence do so because they feel there is no strong central power to check them. . . . Secondly, lacking interference by a third party to whom either side could appeal, Congress and the Muslim League would

settle their differences at once. If there were conflicts in the Cabinet on any question, the majority would rule.⁸¹

Patel reiterated the Congress position concerning the impending plan, expressing the hope that

it will not coerce any group or area which does not want to remain linked with any other. At the same time, it will not be coerced by any group or community. Therefore if the Muslim League insists it wants separation, then Congress will not compel them to remain by force. But it will result in dividing Bengal and the Punjab.

At Simla, Mountbatten received British cabinet approval of the plan on 10 May. But the cabinet had modified the original draft proposals to serve their own purpose. The altered provisions placed the plan in a new perspective. The viceroy showed it to Nehru the same night, and the latter was totally taken aback at the obvious British intention to harm India. The Attlee government now aimed at dividing India into several units, instead of merely permitting certain areas to secede if they were unwilling to stay in the Indian Union.

Legacies of the imperial interest had led Clement Attlee to look at the plan from viewpoint of Britain's military and strategic needs even after the transfer of power. As late as on 10 May 1947, he opened his mind to Major-General Hollis, Chief Staff Officer to the British Defence Ministry, saying, 'I should like the Chiefs of Staff in their discussions with General Ismay to consider the position in the event of (a) Western India, (b) Bengal or (c) one of the States with a sea-board such as Travancore desiring to remain in the Commonwealth when *the rest of India decides to go out*. I should like to have their appreciation from the military point of view.'⁸² It was no wonder that even the Labour Government, not to speak of the Conservative Opposition, wanted only the Congress dominated areas to go out, leaving the rest of India in several parts under British control, direct or indirect.

At that critical hour, Nehru rose to the occasion to destroy this dangerous contrivance, issuing one of his boldest and most outspoken warnings to the viceroy and, through him, to the British Government. On 11 May, only a night after the viceroy showed to him the modified plan, he submitted a note exposing its implications as well as consequences:

Although I have had no opportunity of consulting my colleagues, I am quite clear that my reactions will be shared by them probably in a stronger measure. The first consideration of the papers produced a devastating effect upon me. The picture presented by the proposals was an ominous one and the whole approach to them appeared to me to be dangerous.

Not only do they menace India but also they endanger the future relation between Britain and India.

Nehru challenged the contention that the plan had taken shape after full consultation with Indian leaders. This was only to misguide the people into believing that their leaders were party to what the British had ultimately agreed to offer. The Congress had agreed to the idea that certain Muslim majority areas might go out of the union if they so liked, but the union was still the basic factor. But, he pointed out:

In the new proposals the whole approach has been changed completely and is at total variance with our own approach in the course of recent talks. The proposals start with the rejection of an Indian Union as the successor to power and invite the claims of large numbers of succession States who are permitted to unite if they so wish in two or more States.

Emphasizing that the proposals would lead to deep resentment outside the Muslim League circles, and rejecting them on behalf of the Congress, Nehru showed how the 'proposals virtually scrap the Constituent Assembly which includes all elements excepting the Muslim League'. Furthermore, the proposals had demonstrated the naked British desire to keep some of the major Indian States independent with a view to the Balkanization of India. 'The proposal,' he said, 'that each of the successor States is to conclude independent treaties, presumably with H.M.G. also, which follows if the all-India Union is rejected as a basis and sovereignty reverts to the Provinces, is likely to create many "Ulsters" in India. . . . The "Ulsters" will be looked upon as so many British bases on Indian soil, possibly having British garrisons.'

Criticizing various other aspects of the proposals, Nehru finally warned that there could be no imposed solutions, and that the Congress 'cannot accept these proposals and they are not prepared to acquiesce in the throwing overboard of the basic all-India Union or to accept the theory of Provinces being initially independent successor States.'⁸³

Describing Nehru's note as a 'bombshell', the viceroy reasoned with the home authorities to agree to a new draft which would be acceptable to the Congress as far as possible. And, with the help of V.P. Menon as well as advice from Nehru, he redrafted the plan almost immediately. 'I am very worried,' said Attlee to Mountbatten in a telegram on 13 May, 'about the developments of the last two days as set out in your telegrams', and expressed his hope that the viceroy himself should visit London at the earliest to discuss the matter.⁸⁴

From Simla, the viceroy returned to Delhi on 14 May and received the official summons from London the next day. After hurried discussion with Nehru, Patel, Jinnah and Liaquat on the revised draft of the plan,

he left for home on 18 May. From 19 May to 30 May, Mountbatten remained busy in London working out what ultimately came to be termed the Mountbatten Plan. He had to carry on prolonged negotiations with the members of the cabinet and the leaders of the opposition, and in the end, got the plan approved by the British Cabinet and carried it back to India on 31 May.

During his London exercises, when Mountbatten met Winston Churchill, the latter was still hopeful that India would be divided into several parts, with the larger Indian States still in alliance with Britain. The viceroy did not have the courage to tell him that the Congress was out to extinguish the rule of the rajas, maharajas, nawabs, and even of the Nizam, when paramountcy lapsed, and allowed Churchill to live with his illusions. Happy at the prospects of India's partition, and satisfied that a Pakistan was anyhow being created, but still very fearful of Gandhi's power to destroy the plan, Churchill asked Mountbatten if he foresaw any difficulties from Gandhi's side. The viceroy gave him assurance, saying, that while he knew that 'Mr Gandhi was unpredictable', he 'doubted whether he would create any difficulties which could not be dealt with by Patel and Nehru'.⁸⁵ Further, Churchill felt greatly happy that Nehru was prepared to accept dominion status if power was transferred during 1947. Being assured that things were going on well on the Indian front, the Conservative leader committed his party to helping to rush the legislation through. He handed over to the viceroy a copy of his letter to the Prime Minister dated 21 May which read as follows:

My dear Prime Minister, I have now had an opportunity of consulting my colleagues upon the terms of a possible settlement in India which you and the Viceroy put before us last night.

As a result I am in a position to assure you that if those terms are made good, so that there is an effective acceptance of Dominion status for the *several parts of a divided India*, the Conservative Party will agree to facilitate the passage this Session of the legislation necessary to confer Dominion Status upon such *several parts of India*.⁸⁶

Churchill's emphasis on the *several parts of a divided India* was indicative of his fond hope that, besides Hindustan and Pakistan, the Indian subcontinent should also possess a number of kingdoms as Princestan.

When the Mountbatten Plan was getting its final seal in London, cabled news and press reports from India continued to show that Gandhi was in total opposition to partition and the Congress still expressed its reservations. This was why Churchill was doubtful about the plan's future, though Mountbatten did not give up hope. 'In my opinion', declared the mahatma, 'we are unable to think coherently

whilst British Power is still functioning in India. Its function is not to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw and leave India, if possible, carrying on in an orderly manner, but withdraw in any case on or before the promised date, may be even in chaos.'⁸⁷ The Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, announced on 28 May that the Congress was not happy over the prospect of any kind of division and held the League primarily responsible for the coming tragedy. 'We also do not want this division,' he said, 'to be carried out by the British Government. Even today the British Government can divest itself of all power and responsibility and allow the Interim Government to function as a Dominion Government, the Viceroy occupying the position of constitutional head. It should then be for the free Government to decide whether India shall be partitioned or not, and if partitioned, on what principle partition is to be effected.'⁸⁸

Jinnah and the League, meanwhile, were creating a sensation by demanding a corridor through Hindustan to connect the eastern and western zones of Pakistan. And, Suhrawardy was still in negotiation with the viceroy's advisers about an independent Bengal. Lest the British Cabinet should entertain such notions, Nehru came out strongly against these demands by declaring that 'The independence of Bengal really means in present circumstances the dominance of the Moslem League in Bengal. It means practically the whole of Bengal going into the Pakistan area, although those interested may not say so. We can agree to Bengal remaining united only if it remains in the Union.' About the corridor, he dismissed it contemptuously as 'fantastic and absurd'.⁸⁹

The British Cabinet took note of all that the Congress leaders had to say till the very last moment, and, keeping in view the absolute requirements which would be acceptable both to the Congress and the League in spite of divergences in demands, put its final approval to the plan.

On 31 May Mountbatten returned with the approved plan. On 2 June, he convened a meeting of the Indian leaders to get their acceptance of the plan. Nehru, Patel and Kripalani represented the Congress, while Jinnah, Liaquat and Nishtar represented the Muslim League. Baldev Singh represented the Sikhs. The viceroy's conference with the big seven continued also on 3 June. At the end of these momentous meetings, the Mountbatten Plan was announced to India and the world as the Statement of 3 June 1947. It was announced by Clement Attlee in the House of Commons and by the Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Listowel, in the House of Lords, and was published in India simultaneously. The final decision about India's partition and independence had at last been accepted by the parties concerned.

The statement of 3 June pointed out in its introduction that, although it was the desire of the British Government to transfer power to Indian

hands in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people, they were not able to do so because of the absence of agreement among the Indian political parties and, therefore, 'the task of devising a method by which the wishes of the Indian people can be ascertained has devolved on His Majesty's Government'. 'After full consultation with political leaders in India,' continued the statement, 'His Majesty's Government have decided to adopt for this purpose the plan set out below. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that they have no intention of attempting to frame any ultimate Constitution for India; this is a matter for the Indians themselves. Nor is there anything in this plan to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India.'⁹⁰

The plan, in substance, provided that the constitution framed by the existing Constituent Assembly would not apply to those parts of the country which were unwilling to accept it. Besides the existing Constituent Assembly, therefore, a new and separate Constituent Assembly, consisting of the representatives of those areas which decided not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly, was recommended. 'When this has been done, it will be possible to determine the authority or authorities to whom power should be transferred.'

It was provided that the Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab would each be asked to meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members of the two parts of each legislative assembly sitting separately would be empowered to vote whether or not the province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decided in favour of partition, division would take place and arrangements would be made accordingly. As soon as the decision involving partition had been taken for either province, a Boundary Commission would be set up by the governor-general to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the provinces on the basis of the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The legislative assembly of Sind, meeting in a special session, would also take its decision on whether to join the existing Constituent Assembly or the new and separate constituent assembly.

Regarding the North-West Frontier Province, the plan provided a new procedure saying:

The position of the North-West Frontier Province is exceptional. Two of the three representatives of this Province are already participating in the existing Constituent Assembly. But it is clear, in view of its geographical situation, and other considerations, that, if the whole or any part of the Punjab decides not to join the existing Constituent Assembly, it will be necessary to give the North-West Frontier Province an opportunity to reconsider its position.

The outcome of this reconsideration was to be determined by a referendum, giving the voters the choice between remaining in the existing Constituent Assembly and joining the new and separate constituent assembly. British Baluchistan, in view of its geographical situation, was also given the opportunity to choose between the existing Constituent Assembly and the new one.

Regarding Assam, the plan said that though Assam was a predominantly non-Muslim province, the district of Sylhet which was contiguous to Bengal was predominantly Muslim. Therefore, if Bengal was to be partitioned, a referendum would be held in Sylhet district to decide whether that district would continue to form a part of Assam or join the new province of Eastern Bengal. Regarding the Indian States, the plan stated that the British policy towards them, as contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12 May 1946, remained unchanged.

The plan finally announced:

His Majesty's Government propose to introduce legislation during the current session for the transfer of power this year on a Dominion status basis to one or two successor authorities according to the decisions taken as a result of this announcement. This will be without prejudice to the right of Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth.⁹¹

The viceroy announced the plan over All India Radio on the evening of 3 June.

The whole plan may not be perfect, [he said] but like all plans, its success will depend on the spirit of goodwill with which it is carried out. . . . This is no time for bickering, much less for the continuation in any shape or form of the disorders and lawlessness of the past few months. . . . I have faith in the future of India and am proud to be with you all at this momentous time.⁹²

The same evening, in a sorrowful mood but full of hope, Nehru addressed the nation over the radio to accept the inevitable with a sense of confidence:

It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposals to you, though I have no doubt in my mind that this is the right course. For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free and independent united India. The proposals to allow certain parts to secede, if they so will, is painful for any of us to contemplate. Nevertheless, I am convinced that our present decision is the right one even from the larger viewpoint. . . . Let there be strength and perseverance in adhering to the cause and the ideals we have at heart. Let us face the future not with easy optimism or with any com-

placency or weakness, but with confidence and a firm faith in India. There has been violence — shameful, degrading and revolting violence — in various parts of the country. This must end. . . .

Inevitably on every occasion of crisis and difficulty we think of our great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who has led us unfalteringly for over a generation through darkness and sorrow, to the threshold of our freedom, to him we once more pay our homage. His blessing and wise counsel will happily be with us in the momentous years to come as always. With firm faith in our future I appeal to you to cooperate in the great task ahead and to march together to the haven of freedom for all in India. *Jai Hind!*⁹³

For the mahatma, of course, those were the most agonizing days of his life. He knew what the viceroy had brought back from his masters to offer to India. While the Congress High Command felt that the acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan would usher in peace, Gandhi continued to believe that partition before restoration of peace would be fatal. The day the viceroy returned with the plan, a most unhappy Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan met Gandhi to say: 'So, Mahatmaji, you will now regard us as Pakistanis?' More distressed than the Frontier Gandhi, the helpless Mahatma could only say:

Non-violence knows no despair. It is the hour of test for you and the Khudai Khidmatgars. You can declare that Pakistan is unacceptable to you and brave the worst. What fear can there be for those who are pledged to 'do or die'? It is my intention to go to the Frontier as soon as circumstances permit. I shall not take out a passport because I do not believe in division. And if as a result somebody kills me I shall be glad to be so killed. If Pakistan comes into being, my place will be in Pakistan.⁹⁴

Gandhi's feeling for his most intimate comrade was indeed deep and moving. 'I cannot bear to see Badshah Khan's grief. . . . His inner agony wrings my heart. But, if I gave way to tears, it would be cowardly and, the stalwart Pathan as he is, he would break down,' Gandhi was heard saying to himself in the early hours of 1 June.⁹⁵

Gandhi's unwillingness to accept the plan worried the viceroy and he was apprehensive of what the Mahatma might do. He knew, as everybody else did, that the only Indian who could destroy the Plan, if he wanted to, was Mahatma Gandhi. On 4 June, Krishna Menon informed the viceroy that the Mahatma was in an emotional state of mind and the Congress leaders themselves feared that he was in a mood to denounce the plan and reject its acceptance at his prayer meeting that very evening. An worried viceroy at once requested Gandhi for an interview and the latter met him in the evening, before coming to his prayer.

He was 'in a very upset mood' to see that the united India for which he had worked all his life was at last being destroyed by the plan. The

viceroys pleaded his own helplessness, and persuaded the Mahatma to believe that the plan was the only possible course in a very difficult situation. In his own way, Mountbatten tried to pacify Gandhi even by suggesting that, 'Although many newspapers had christened it "The Mountbatten Plan", they should really have christened it "The Gandhi Plan".'⁹⁶ The Mahatma showed no desire to contradict or challenge the contention, but returned from the viceregal palace to the prayer meeting, not to offer his support to the plan, but at least not to openly oppose it.

Gandhi told his audience that evening that by accepting the plan the Congress Working Committee had not yielded to the force of arms but to the force of circumstances. Since the vast majority of Congressmen did not want unwilling partners and since their motto was no coercion, they had reluctantly to agree to the secession of some parts from the Indian Union. Gandhi did not blame the viceroy for the plan. On the other hand, he called it the act of the Congress and the Muslim League. 'The viceroy had openly declared that he wanted a united India but he was powerless in face of the Congress acceptance, however, reluctantly, of the Muslim position.'⁹⁷

The Mountbatten Plan thus became a settled fact of history. The immediate task before all concerned was to work it out and usher in the dawn of independence.

5. Implementation of the Plan

On 4 June 1947, only a day after the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan, the viceroy held a significant press conference in the Council House, New Delhi. Sardar Patel, as the Member of Cabinet in charge of Information and Broadcasting, presided over the conference. There the viceroy presented various clarifications regarding the plan, and announced that the British withdrawal should not wait till June 1948, but should be effected much earlier, and that the date of independence could be 15 August 1947.

Enormous responsibilities fell upon the Congress when the date of independence was fixed so near. A brief interval between the announcement of the plan on 3 June and the coming of independence on 15 August was destined to be a time of extreme anxieties as well as of immense problems. The future of hundreds of Indian States still remained undecided since the decisions about the transfer of power concerned only the British Indian territories. The partition of Bengal and the Punjab was going to affect millions of men and the line of demarcation to be drawn was a problem of considerable doubt and dispute. The plan had thrown the Frontier Province into total turmoil and placed the Congress in a most difficult situation. The danger of large-scale civil war

threatened the country. The British decision to withdraw from India in the quickest possible manner implied that the maintenance of peace and order in the country was solely the responsibility of the Indian parties in the situation of intense bitterness and turmoil the impending partition had created.

There were many in the Congress who did not approve of the 3 June Plan. Several members of the All India Congress Committee criticized the Working Committee's decision to accept it. It was not unknown to most Congressmen that Gandhi had never given his support to it. It was reported that the AICC would oppose the Working Committee when it met in mid-June to discuss the situation. For the Mahatma, it was again a testing time: how to maintain unity in the party when it was required to face many grave issues. Since the decision already taken by the Working Committee could no longer be rejected, he decided to stand by it and work for restoring harmony in the party.

In spite of differences between Gandhi and Nehru on certain basic issues of the time — a difference as between idealism and pragmatism — the former described the latter as the 'uncrowned King' of India and reposed total faith in him in that hour of exceptional ordeal. 'He is transparent as crystal, commented the mahatma on Nehru on 14 June, on the eve of the crucial AICC meeting:

His loyalty and affection are beyond compare. With all the ideological fights that he has had with me in the past, today he takes everything from me implicitly . . . He combines with the heart of a child a towering intellect, wide learning and an ability which can stand comparison with any in the world. He has renunciation, too. He is quite capable of laying aside all the trappings of power as easily as a snake does its outworn skin. His tireless energy puts even the youth to shame.⁹⁸

In one of their noblest gestures at that awesome time, in order to remove fear from the mind of the Indian Muslims when partition was coming in the name of religion and the two-nation theory, both Gandhi and Nehru emphasized the fact that, while the Muslim-majority areas which were going out of India might call themselves Pakistan, the rest of the country need not call itself Hindustan which would mean the abode of the Hindus. Gandhi did not believe that a mere readjustment of the geographical territories of India could mean two nations, and Nehru refused to call the non-Pakistan areas as Hindustan and took pride in calling it the Republic of India. It was made abundantly clear that the Indian Union was the national home of all religious denominations. This proved a source of considerable confidence to Indian Muslims when their co-religionists in the emerging Pakistan stood only for themselves, creating total fear in the mind of the minorities.

The All India Congress Committee met in Delhi on 14 and 15 June

1947 to discuss the Mountbatten Plan and the policies to be followed in regard to it. The High Command was, of course, required to explain the reasons for which they agreed to accept the partition of India. Moreover, when the whole country was in a state of excitement, it was necessary for Congressmen themselves to be convinced of the validity of the decision in order to convince their countrymen to accept the inevitable. Critics were everywhere in plenty to blame the Congress. The High Command thought it their duty to pacify the people through the AICC and their provincial and local committees.

The AICC wanted to hear the views of the Mahatma, knowing as they did his avowed stand against the vivisection of India. And Gandhi rose to defend the Working Committee by describing its members as 'old and tried servants of the nation with a proud record of achievement to their credit, who had hitherto constituted the backbone of the Congress.' He told them it would be ill advised to discard or amend the Working Committee's resolution on partition, since the committee, as the representative of the AICC, had accepted the plan. As all the parties had accepted the partition plan, including the Congress, it would be improper for them to go back on its word. Gandhi explained how, in spite of the Congress opposition to Pakistan, they had to accept the decision on partition, however unpalatable, for the sake of peace in the country.

Vividly describing the condition of India on the eve of the British departure, Nehru made an impassioned appeal to the members of the AICC to appreciate the factors which forced them to that fateful decision. 'Partition was better than murder of innocent citizens', he exclaimed. Patel, too, narrated the circumstances in which they had to accept partition, when no other door was left open to them 'to get rid of the obstruction of the Anglo-Muslim League combine within the administration which threatened the country with sabotage'. Whether the AICC liked it or not, argued Patel, there was already Pakistan in action both in the undivided Punjab and Bengal. Better, therefore, that the Congress accept a real Pakistan than continue with the current disastrous conditions.

At the end of the long debate, the Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, presented a graphic picture of the harrowing scenes which he had himself seen in some of the riot-affected areas. In one place, he saw a well into which women with their children, numbering 107 in all, had thrown themselves to save their honour. Inside a place of worship, 50 young women were killed by their menfolk who wanted to save them from dishonour. He saw heaps of bones in a house where 307 persons, mainly women and children, were driven by an invading mob, locked up and burnt alive.

These ghastly experiences [said the Congress President] have no doubt affected my approach to the question. Some members have accused us of having taken this decision out of fear. I must admit the truth of this charge, but not in the sense in which it is made. The fear is not for the lives lost or of the widows' wail or the orphans' cry or of the many houses burnt. The fear is that if we go on like this, retaliating and heaping indignities upon one another, we shall progressively reduce ourselves to a state of cannibalism and worse. . . . And I may tell you that often I have felt and said that in these days one is ashamed to call oneself an Indian."

What impressed the AICC most was the reasoning of Nehru about the practical aspect of the political situation as created by the British with the imposition of the Cabinet Mission Plan under which the government of the time worked. While the British retained control over the administration and the Muslim League members in government worked to destroy the existing structure at the centre and in some provinces, the country rapidly headed towards anarchy and chaos. The High Command had to pay the price of partition in order to avoid a permanent tragedy under any constitutional British arrangement which aimed at patronizing communalism at the cost of national progress under the pretext of compromise and impartiality.

Patel too described his nine months' experience in the Interim Government which had completely disillusioned him regarding the merit of the Cabinet Mission Plan, and he told the AICC that the communal veto which the League was given would have harmed and hindered the country's advance at every stage.

Thus the AICC was called upon to accept the Working Committee's resolution on the 3 June Plan, and it was endorsed on 15 June by an overwhelming majority while declaring:

The picture of India we have learnt to cherish will remain in our minds and hearts. The AICC earnestly trusts that when present passions have subsided, India's problems will be viewed in their proper perspective and the false doctrine of two nations in India will be discredited and discarded by all. The proposals of June 3, 1947 are likely to lead to the secession of some parts of the country from India. However much this may be regretted, the AICC accepts this possibility in the circumstances now prevailing.¹⁰⁰

The debate on the 3 June Plan clearly showed how perturbed and perplexed were most Congress leaders even though they fully understood the compulsions behind its acceptance. While Govind Ballabh Pant considered the Plan better than the Cabinet Mission Plan, Maulana Azad argued that the Cabinet Mission Plan was better than the partition plan. He felt that accepting partition was a means of getting the British out of the country at the earliest and he hoped that India would once

again be united before long. Purushottamdas Tandon felt that India could have better suffered British rule a little longer than purchase freedom at the cost of partition. Jagat Narain Lal pleaded that the Congress should not have given up its opposition to partition, since it was the party's unequivocal stand since May 1942. Some others, like Choithram Gidwani, interpreted the Congress acceptance of the plan as a surrender to the League's violence. The majority opinion, however, that the division of India was the only remedy for the chronic malady of communal strife, prevailed.

At this stage, the Congress thought it essential to pay most urgent and serious attention to the incorporation of the Indian States in the Indian Union. Wild ambitions were being exhibited by some of the princes ever since the Attlee declaration removed all doubts about the British withdrawal. After the announcement of the 3 June Plan, some of the princes or their dewans dreamt of the independence of their States, simultaneously with that of the British India. While some of the major States like Hyderabad prepared for independence openly, some others worked for it secretly. On 13 June, information reached Gandhi that the Dewan of Travancore, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, had banned the State People's Congress from holding any public meetings, and had declared that Travancore would proclaim its independence on 15 August. He had further gone on to say that, if any of the Maharaja's subjects objected, they were free to leave the State. At the time the AICC was meeting on 14 June, Gandhi received a telegram from the dewan about his decision to declare an independent Travancore outside the Indian Union.

The Dewan and the Maharaja of Travancore were not alone in entertaining such strange hopes. It was, in fact, a fairly common impression among the princely class that, with the end of British paramountcy over the States, they were free to choose their own path — either to remain completely independent or to enter into treaty relations with the successor governments on matters of common concern. Surprisingly enough, many of the rulers did not feel the necessity of ascertaining what their people wanted in this regard, and some of them were blind to the existence of people's organizations in their States struggling to join the national mainstream. The wiser ones, of course, had decided to join the Constituent Assembly. But, for others, the times did not seem to have changed in any way.

The Congress decided to put an end to separatist tendencies among the princes without delay and in no uncertain manner. The vicious example set by the Muslim League that secession of territories was possible was an encouraging sign to some. It was necessary that the Congress should take forceful action to bring the ruling chiefs to reason.

At the AICC meeting on 14-15 June, a firm decision about the States was taken.

It is amazing [declared Gandhi] that the princes, who were virtual slaves of the British, should spurn an honourable position in the Union of India and should want to be independent. The Indian Union are not inimical to the princes. But today when the reins of the Government have come into the peoples' hands, they have jealously to guard the welfare of the whole of India. The people of the States are with us. If the princes become independent, it can only be at the cost of the freedom of the people of the States. And so far as I know India, such a thing will never be tolerated. The princes must read the writing on the wall.¹⁰¹

The AICC discussed the constitutional position of the States in the light of the Cabinet Mission memorandum of 12 May 1946 and the statement of 16 May 1946. Those declarations made it clear that the Indian Union would consist of the British administered provinces as well as the Indian States, and that the British paramountcy would lapse on the transfer of power to the Indian hands. It was also provided that, in the event of any State not entering into a federal relationship with the Union, it would enter into other political arrangements with it. The 3 June Plan stood by these principles, not adding anything new to them.

The AICC strongly denounced the theory of paramountcy as interpreted by some of the rulers, and made it known that the relationship between the Government of India and the States would neither be exhausted by lapse of paramountcy nor would the lapse lead to the independence of the States. Moreover, the people of the States must possess a dominating voice in any decision regarding their future since sovereignty resided in the people. The theory of paramountcy, as upheld by the British, rested on the principle of the security of India as a whole. In the interests of that security, arrangements were made to limit the powers of the princes while granting them protection. The same needs of security could not be ignored at the departure of the British. After considering all these aspects the AICC passed the following resolution:

The AICC cannot admit the right of any state in India to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India. That would be denial of the course of Indian history and of the objectives of the Indian people today.

The AICC trusts that the Rulers of the states will appreciate fully the situation as it exists today and will in full co-operation with their people enter as democratic units in the Indian Union thereby serving the cause of their own people as well as of India as a whole.¹⁰²

Even before the AICC passed this resolution on 15 June, Nehru had announced a firm policy against rulers who were unwilling to join the Constituent Assembly and had warned them of the consequences of their hostile attitude towards the Indian Union. The princes, in their turn, had looked to the viceroy for protection, still unmindful of the meaning of the transfer of power. On 10 June, Nehru, Patel and Kripalani had met the viceroy to inform him of the Congress attitude towards the States and to let him know in advance what the AICC would subsequently demand. Nehru explained that the notion of princely independence was completely out of question since they had never had an independent existence before. With regard to Hyderabad, the largest of the States, he said that 'this State had grown up through treachery and had always been in the wake of the victors to gather the spoils'.

The viceroy, with his known sympathy for the major States, argued that some of the States did not join the Constituent Assembly because of their fear that the union centre under the 3 June Plan would be a much stronger centre than under the Cabinet Mission Plan. To this, Sardar Patel replied that, so far as the States were concerned, the centre would be strengthened with their consent. But he resented the fact that the States were not moving towards any representative government of their own. When Mountbatten disagreed with Patel's view, Nehru 'flared up' to protest that no ruler could decide himself whether or not to join the Constituent Assembly without the consent of their people and declared: 'I will encourage rebellion in all States that go against us.' Kripalani also demanded that 'The people must have some say in the matter.'¹⁰³ The Viceroy confessed before the leaders that he himself 'had no doubt what would happen in the end' and said that some rulers 'had already seen sense and some were fast beginning to'.

It was the Political Department of the Government of India under the viceroy as the Crown Representative and with Conrad Lawrence Corfield as the Political Adviser which came under the suspicion of the Congress High Command for their active part in creating illusions in the mind of the princes regarding their position. Nehru tried to end the power of that department so that the Interim Government could deal with the States directly. In an important high-level meeting with the viceroy in the presence of Jinnah on 13 January, Nehru brought serious charges against Conrad Corfield for the interpretation of the Cabinet Mission's Memorandum he was conveying to the princes so as to encourage them to seek separation. Corfield read out the extract from the said memorandum which stated, 'The void will have to be filled, either by the States entering into a federal relationship with the successor Government or Governments in British India, or failing this, entering into particular political arrangements with it or them' to establish his

theory that the term 'particular political arrangements' implied relations with and as between the autonomous units.

Nehru challenged the contention that the term could at all signify the possibility of a State becoming independent, although he admitted that under that principle any States could, if they so wished, join the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. As Corfield was being pushed to the corner, Jinnah came to his rescue and presented his view that the States were perfectly free not to join any Constituent Assembly. He knew that only a few States were geographically adjacent to Pakistan while almost all the States were within the Indian territories. Moreover, by their independence, the Muslim rulers like the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of Bhopal, among others, would remain as strong and permanent allies of Pakistan inside the Indian mainland. That would keep India weak and Balkanized and strengthen the position of Pakistan in the family of nations.

With this strategy in view, Jinnah declared that 'Every Indian State was sovereign State' and emphasized this saying:

Indian States were sovereign States for every purpose except in so far as they had entered into treaties with the Crown. British India could do nothing to them. The Crown was under certain obligations to them and they to it, according to the terms of treaties and agreements which had been made. To say that the Governor-General or the British Parliament could lay down that every Indian State was bound to enter one Constituent Assembly or the other, was not according to the law or to the Constitution. If the States liked to come in, they could do so by agreement, but there was no way of forcing them in.¹⁰⁴

Nehru strongly reacted to this view and tried to prove that by no tests of sovereignty could an Indian State be defined as sovereign. They had no power to establish international relations or to declare war. The Political Department over them was run by funds sanctioned by the Government of India. From no aspect of their existence, could one find any trace of sovereignty.

Conscious that the Congress would resist the principle of States' sovereignty, and the continuance of the Political Department, the Viceroy had to yield. He decided to close down the Political Department under British Control, and to open a new 'States Department' forthwith, divided into two sections, to be ready for the coming changes.¹⁰⁵

Jinnah, though vanquished, continued to harp on his doctrine that the States could remain independent after partition and independence. When the AICC passed its resolution on 15 June denying that right to them and called upon them to join the Indian Union without delay, Jinnah issued a statement to the Press within the next two days saying:

Constitutionally and legally the Indian States will be independent sovereign States on the termination of paramountcy and they will be free to decide for themselves any course they like to adopt. It is open to the States to join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly or the Pakistan Constituent Assembly or decide to remain independent. In the last case they can either enter into such arrangement or relationship with Hindustan or Pakistan as they may choose. . . . In my opinion they are free to remain independent if they so desire. Neither the British Government nor the British Parliament nor any other power or body can compel them to do anything contrary to their free will and accord, nor have they any power or sanction of any kind to do so.¹⁰⁶

While Jinnah's high hope of winning over the Muslim Nizam and the Nawabs of India as subordinate allies of Pakistan dissolved in no time, he lost his claim to Kashmir by his own doctrine that its Hindu Maharaja was free to choose his own way, even though his State was geographically contiguous to Pakistan and possessed an overwhelmingly Muslim majority population. Jinnah's support for the princes thus turned out to be one of his biggest political blunders.

During the next few weeks the ground was prepared to bring in nearly all of the 565 princely States into the Indian Union in one of the most spectacular political enterprises in history. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, in charge of the States Department, was called upon to play a role much more significant than that of Germany's Bismarck in winning over the States on the eve of independence. Through peoples' organizations in various States the Congress could give expression to a formidable body of opinion in favour of the Union, forcing the rulers to abandon their hope of separate existence, and Patel, by creating fears and hopes in their mind, finally achieved one of the greatest victories for the Congress in spite of the British and the League. The rulers of only two States, Hyderabad and Kashmir, did not agree to join the Union till the end and thereby created serious complications for themselves and India.

In the meantime, the Mountbatten Plan was being worked out in the provinces where a decision was necessary regarding their future. On 20 June, the members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly representing the Hindu majority areas of the province voted for the partition of Bengal. On 23 June, the Punjab Legislative Assembly also decided in favour of the partition of the province in a similar manner. Three days later, the Sind Legislative Assembly, meeting in a special session, decided by a majority of votes to join the Pakistan Constituent Assembly. In Baluchistan, the members of the Shahi Jirga and the non-official members of the Quetta Municipality, at a special meeting on 29 June, took a decision to join Pakistan, with non-Muslim members abstaining from voting. In the first week of July, a referendum was held in Sylhet in Assam, and the

voters of that district decided to join East Bengal which was to form a part of Pakistan.

It was the North-West Frontier Province which had to pass through a most agonizing period while deciding its future. The Congress High Command and the Frontier Congress faced a trying time when the provisions of the Mountbatten Plan for a referendum suddenly placed the Pathan population in the throes of an unthinkable crisis.

'The question of referendum in my opinion,' stated Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan soon after the Plan was announced, 'does not arise. But I would welcome it any day if it was to be conducted without intimidation and without outside influence. All India knows what travail the Frontier Province has recently passed through and yet may have to. . . . My advice would, therefore, be that the Frontier Province should be left alone till the political weather has cleared.'¹⁰⁷ Most Congressmen in the province felt that a referendum in a peaceful time would give a chance to the simple-minded Pathans to understand the issue objectively and exercise their will freely, but at a time of violent strife when communal fanaticism had overtaken the Punjab and the Frontier, it would confuse the mind of the people and force them to submit to the dictates of the League. The Khan Brothers therefore pleaded for a postponement of the referendum in order to avoid a civil war among their people. If this was not possible, they and their followers demanded a referendum on the issue of Pakistan and Pathanistan so that the voters would not have to go by religious considerations. Besides, the option for Pathanistan would really serve their vital self-interest by making them a separate entity as the Pushtu-speaking race under their own constitution. In due course, the autonomous Pathanistan could decide whether to join Hindustan or Pakistan in consideration of their larger interest. In substance, the Frontier Congress demanded an interim arrangement since a referendum at that time was surely to be conducted on a purely communal basis. The League would pose the issue as whether the Muslims of the Frontier wanted to remain with the Hindus of India or the Muslims of Pakistan, and the innocence of the Pathan race would be exploited to the League's advantage.

Mahatma Gandhi accepted this view and suggested that both the Congress and the League should leave the Pathans alone for the time being:

Let both honour the Pathan sentiment [he declared on 20 June] and let the Pathans have their own constitution for internal affairs and administration. It would promote Pathan solidarity and avoid internal conflict, so that they would be better able unitedly to federate with Pakistan or with the Union of India. And this should be irrespective of whether there was or was not a referendum. Any premature referendum would be a leap in the dark.¹⁰⁸

To Mountbatten it was not indeed a leap in the dark but a sure step to handing over the Frontier to Pakistan. Unprepared to alter his plan after it was accepted by all parties, he did not want to entertain any new idea which was unacceptable to Jinnah. The Congress High Command found itself in a fix. While the Viceroy would not change his plan, the Frontier Congress would not accept it either. Nor would Jinnah move an inch to compromise with any when his party had fully prepared for a referendum by rousing communal passion. Prevailed upon by Gandhi, when Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan met Jinnah on 18 June to negotiate an understanding on honourable terms, the latter showed no interest in either his person or his proposals. It pained Gandhi to the utmost that the one who was enshrined in countless Pathan hearts as their 'uncrowned king' should receive such treatment from the Quaid-e-Azam. And, Ghaffar Khan was obliged to take a decision on his own, unmindful of its results. He discussed the fate of his province with his comrades and sent their resolution to Jinnah from Peshawar on 24 June which contained the following passage:

This meeting of the members of the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, Congress Parliamentary Party, Khudai Khidmatgars and Zalmai Pakhtoons [the Young Pathan League] held at Bannu on the 21st June, 1947, under the chairmanship of Khan Amir Mohammad Khan, President, Frontier Provincial Congress Committee, unanimously resolves that a free Pathan State of all Pakhtoons be established. The constitution of the State will be framed on the basis of Islamic conception of democracy, equality and social justice. This meeting appeals to all the Pathans to unite for the attainment of this cherished goal and not to submit to any non-Pakhtoon domination.¹⁰⁹

Since this decision of the Frontier Congressmen on such radical lines came so late, it failed to influence the course of events which were clearly going against them. Helplessly, therefore, they decided upon a desperate stand: not to take part in the coming referendum as it was going to be fought purely on communal lines, which were irrelevant as far as the Frontier Province was concerned. Instead, they expressed their desire to face a referendum if it also provided the option of Pathanistan.

The Congress High Command had to agree to this decision of the Frontier Congress even if they had accepted the Mountbatten Plan. Accordingly, Acharya Kripalani as the Congress President wrote to the viceroy on 28 June:

We have accepted the Plan. . . . At the same time we cannot impose any course of action on the N.W.F.P. to which the leaders and people there are opposed. . . . We have again conferred with Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. . . .

He tells us that there is a strong and insistent demand that the Frontier people should be allowed to pronounce on the issue of independence. They are totally averse to taking part in a referendum which must turn purely on the communal issue. . . . Badsha Khan contends that if the issue cannot be between Pathanistan and Pakistan, he would advise his followers to abstain from participating in the referendum. This, he holds, will ease the situation somewhat though the Province may be lost to the Congress, at least for the time being.¹¹⁰

This decision of the High Command removed the fear of a civil war between the Congress Pathans and the League Pathans at the time of the referendum. Gandhi also assured the viceroy that 'the referendum would go on without any interference' by the followers of Ghaffar Khan since they would abstain from voting either way. The viceroy in the meanwhile removed Olaf Caroe from office and appointed Rob Lockhart as the new governor, and put British officers of the Indian Army in charge of the referendum. As the election tempo rose high and the League resorted to all types of methods to win victory, the Congress maintained perfect calm and Khan Sahib rendered all possible assistance to the Referendum Commissioner for smooth conduct of voting. Much impressed, the new governor reported to the viceroy on 6 July: 'The Congress party at meetings keep re-affirming their intention to abstain from voting. The leaders also, publicly, have been and are instructing their followers to be peaceful.'¹¹¹ Overcoming his personal and ideological convictions in favour of keeping the Frontier with India, the Congress premier promised the governor that 'there will be no serious trouble during the Referendum, and that his, i.e., the Congress party followers and Red Shirts will obey his orders to behave'.¹¹² The governor was himself surprised to see that even though 'the Congress Pathanistan' meetings were being held to demonstrate the Congress resentment towards Pakistan, yet there was no intention to disrupt the coming referendum. Referring to one such meeting held on 6 July, the governor reported: 'The crowd was about 10,000 of whom 3,000 to 4,000 are said to have come armed, but they deposited their weapons some distance from the meeting. Proceedings were orderly. I personally met a few local inhabitants on their way back from the meeting. They were cheerful and polite.'¹¹³

This was yet another proof of the Frontier Gandhi's hold on his people as well as of their faith in the Congress cult of non-violence. But, knowing as he did the violent temper of the Pathan race, and apprehending large-scale bloodshed at the time of the referendum, the viceroy could think only of Gandhi as the man to save the Frontier people from an impending holocaust. 'It is important, I think,' Mountbatten requested Gandhi on 5 July, 'that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan should have your advice as soon as possible, and if you would care to

send him a letter, I could arrange to get it delivered to Peshawar by hand of pilot, and ask the Governor to send it on. I am most grateful for your help.' Gandhi, who was already advising peace, sent his instructions to Ghaffar Khan through a Khudai Khidmatgar that very day, and also sent a letter through the Viceroy saying:

... Real Pathan bravery was now on its trial. It was to be cheerfully meeting blows or even meeting death at the hands of the opponents without the slightest sort of retaliation. Boycott would certainly result in a legal victory for Pakistanis but it would be a moral defeat, if without the slightest fear of violence from your side, the bulk of the Pathans refrained in a dignified manner from participating in the referendum. There should be no fuss, no procession, no disobedience of any orders from authority.¹¹⁴

Gandhi's message worked. Badshah Khan's followers went round from village to village to ask the Pathans to remain absolutely non-violent in spite of provocation from the League's supporters. The Congressmen kept their patience against what appeared to them as an organized conspiracy between the officers and the Leaguers in manipulating the referendum. On 12 July, Ghaffar Khan informed Gandhi:

We have been working under very difficult and trying circumstances, but have adhered to non-violence in thought, word and deed. How long a state of affairs like this can last, it is not easy for me to say. . . . In a nut-shell, the Muslim Leaguers backed by officials are out to create disturbances. We have done everything humanly possible to avoid a clash. Another matter which is causing serious concern to us is the presence in our Province of a large number of Punjabis who . . . openly incite people to violence. Not only that but they have also gone to the length of suggesting in public meetings that the top leaders of the Red Shirts should be done away with. They also say openly that after Pakistan has been established there will be a trial on the lines of the Nuremberg trial and all of them who are called as traitors to Islam will be hanged.¹¹⁵

The results of the Frontier referendum were a foregone conclusion. Those who stood by India did not take part in it. Others were brought in by threats and under intimidation to vote for Pakistan. Countless bogus votes were cast. The Pathans were given no option to vote for Pathanistan. When, therefore, the results were announced at the end of the third week of July, it was seen that out of a total electorate of 5,72,798, a little over 50 per cent or 2,89,244 people had voted for Pakistan. It was a victory for Mountbatten and Jinnah that Pakistan at last had been made viable.

On 30 July, when Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan took leave of Gandhi and left Delhi, he spoke these parting words: 'Mahatmaji has shown us the

true path. Long after we are no more, the coming generation of Hindus will remember him as an *avatar* like the Lord Krishna, Muslims as God's messenger, and Christians as another Prince of Peace. . . . May God spare him for long to give us inspiration and strength to fight for truth and justice to the last.'¹¹⁶ Overwhelmed by the feeling that within a fortnight from that date he and his people were going to be the citizens of another country, this towering Indian and Congressman of long standing, uttered as if with premonition, 'Pray for us that He may give us courage and faith — we are going to be faced with terrible times.'¹¹⁷

And, even after the so-called people's verdict in favour of Pakistan, the Congress Premier Khan Sahib remained a loyal Congressman. What astonished the viceroy was that the Muslim members of the Frontier Legislature did not change loyalty but remained Khan Sahib's supporters as the Congress Ministry continued in the Frontier Province till independence came. With a sense of uncertainty for the future, the governor reported to the viceroy after the referendum verdict that 'the Congress Party do intend to stage a movement, and that this movement may be violent. . . . Most significant of all is that Dr Khan Sahib, who came to see me on 21st July, practically admitted that a movement which might result in violence was likely.'¹¹⁸

In the fitness of things, a movement for Pathanistan became the future hope of the Frontier Congressmen and of the 'Young Pathans' under Ghani Khan, the son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Less than a week before the birth of Pakistan, the departing British governor informed the viceroy that 'Pathanistan is being vigorously advocated and the idea is, I think, proving attractive to many Pathans.'¹¹⁹ After Pakistan was born and, in changed conditions, the Pathan leaders correctly foresaw that the new state was bound to come under an autocratic system, and their province was destined to suffer Punjabi domination. They, therefore, decided to launch a new struggle for complete internal autonomy for the freedom-loving Pathans. Demanding an independent existence in Pathanistan, they nevertheless announced that 'This State will enter into agreement on Defence, External Affairs and Communications with the Dominion of Pakistan.' 'I will not forsake it even if I stand alone in the world,' proclaimed Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan while demanding Pathanistan in a representative assemblage of the Pathan *Jirgas*, Zalmai Pukhtoon, Khudai Khidmatgars, and the tribal leaders, within three weeks of the birth of Pakistan.¹²⁰

India lost the Frontier Province thanks to British political machinations, but Pakistan did not win a willing people in the Pathans. Referring to the referendum which gave the Muslim League the golden opportunity to grab that territory for Pakistan, one of the chief architects of that sordid episode, Olaf Caroe, wrote in his memoirs long afterwards the following words:

That this allegiance may not have been a true interpretation of the deeper instincts touching Pathan destinies is becoming clearer now after 25 years. For the uneasy joinder of the Frontier with the Punjab and Sind is today a problem which calls in question the survival of even what remains of Pakistan after the severance of Bangladesh.¹²¹

As the future of the affected provinces under the Mountbatten Plan was being decided by the respective legislatures or the peoples, an imminent responsibility fell upon the viceroy and the High Commands of the Congress and the League for finding an acceptable person to head the Boundary Commission for demarcating the lines of partition through the populous and integrally existing provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in the most impartial way. The ultimate choice fell upon Cyril Radcliffe, an eminent and reputed barrister of England, known for his judicious approach to difficult and complicated legal problems. Radcliffe had neither seen India before, nor did he possess adequate information about the affairs of the subcontinent. It was, in fact, his lack of knowledge of India which was regarded as his best qualification for undertaking one of the last and most difficult tasks of the British, without any bias or prejudice towards either the Muslims or the non-Muslims. Nehru agreed to his selection and so did Jinnah. Within a few weeks, through July and early August, Radcliffe, as the Chairman of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions, was called upon to draw the line of demarcation through territories covering 175,000 square miles and involving nearly 90 million people.

Radcliffe was to be assisted by a panel of four judges in each of the two provinces in his onerous work, but the ultimate decision on actual boundary lines was to come from him since the Indian judges, selected on party lines, were not likely to agree on all matters. Radcliffe was instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the provinces 'on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims' and in doing so, where necessary, to take into account 'other factors'. The deadline for his recommendations was fixed as on 15 August 1947.

6. The Coming of the Independence

From early in July 1947 the Labour Government in Britain had to hurry through legislative formalities to pass the Indian Independence Bill a few weeks before the date fixed for independence. It seems unbelievable that even at that very late hour, when independence was no longer just a dream, Churchill thought it appropriate to raise his voice against the word 'independence'. Confined in bed for an operation for hernia, he wrote to Premier Attlee on 1 July when the second reading of the Bill was about to be presented in Parliament, saying:

I am much concerned to hear from my colleagues whom you consulted yesterday that you propose to call the India Bill, 'The Indian Independence Bill'. This, I am assured, is entirely contrary to the text, which corresponds to what we have previously been told were your intentions. The essence of the Mountbatten proposals and the only reason why I gave support to them is because they establish the phase of Dominion Status. Dominion status is not the same as Independence, although it may be freely used to establish independence. It is not true that a community is independent when its Ministers have in fact taken the Oath of Allegiance to The King. This is a measure of grave constitutional importance and a correct and formal procedure and nomenclature should be observed. The correct title would be, it seems to me, 'The Indian Dominions Bill'. I should however be quite willing to support it if it were called, 'The India Bill, 1947' or 'The India Self-Government Bill'. I am glad to hear you are considering such alterations.¹²²

Attlee did not oblige Churchill and did not consider any alterations. The fact of independence, he felt, was not going to be altered by removal of that word. Moreover, the reaction of the Congress to such a proposition could have been extreme, and all of Mountbatten's attempts to keep India in the Commonwealth would have ended in nothing if Churchill's views about the position of the Indian Ministers *vis-à-vis* the British King had found expression in parliament.

The Indian Independence Bill, presented in parliament on 4 July, stated that 'The two independent dominions, known as India and Pakistan, will come into existence on 15 August 1947.' On that day British authority over the territories till then included in British India, was to cease, and also the control of the British Parliament over the two dominions. Also to lapse on that day was British paramountcy over the Indian States.

During the debate on the Bill on 10 July, Attlee told the Commons: 'The Bill brings to an end one chapter in the long connection between British and India, but it opens another. British rule which has endured so long is now, at the instance of this country, coming to an end.'¹²³ It was not an act of abdication, he explained, but 'the fulfilment of Britain's mission in India'. Lord Listowel, the Secretary of State for India declared in the House of Lords on 16 July: 'The difficulties and misunderstandings that have clouded our relations with India in the past will have disappeared, and there will be a greater fund of goodwill between us than ever before in the history of our long relationship.'¹²⁴

During the debates on the second and third readings of the Bill, varied opinions were expressed on the nature of the transfer of power. Lord Herbert Samuel described the bill as 'a model to all future generations . . . a treaty of peace without a war', and bestowed his praise on Mahatma Gandhi for his unique creed of non-violence which represented one of the essentials of the pacific spirit of the Hindu

religion. 'But for that,' he said, 'the course of events in India might have been very different.' Much was said about the partition of the country. And, at least one member in the Commons, William Gallachar, held the British responsible for it saying: 'I do not accept the statement that the people (of India) were responsible for the partition any more than the people of Ireland were responsible for the partition of Ireland. . . . The ruling class here with their kindred in India must take responsibility.' So, too, in the Lords, Lord Rankeillour compared the British act in India with an episode of the crucifixion, namely, the 'disclaimer of responsibility by ablution' and quoted: 'When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.'

On 18 July 1947, the Indian Independence Bill received royal assent. On the following day, the viceroy announced the establishment of two separate provisional governments, one for India and one for Pakistan.

Meeting in Delhi on 19 and 20 July, the Congress Working Committee welcomed the ending of the foreign domination and the dawn of freedom but also expressed its anguish over the manner in which the freedom was coming, accompanied as it was by the secession of some parts of the country. It was a matter of profound distress that the living unity of India which nature, history and tradition had fashioned was breaking up. In its resolution on independence the Working Committee stated:

The Committee realise fully that the ending of British rule in India is an event of historic and world significance which opens the doors of freedom and opportunity to our people and which will have far reaching consequences in national and international affairs. To India it brings substantial attainment of her objective and the freedom to advance according to the wishes of her people.¹²⁵

The Working Committee decided that the day of independence should be 'fittingly and solemnly celebrated all over the country' and called upon the people 'to begin this new era in India's history with courage, discipline and confidence and with the determination to extend full freedom and opportunity to every citizen to whatever religion or class he or she may belong.'¹²⁶

The Constituent Assembly had in the meanwhile approved the flag of the independent India. Since it was substantially the same as the Congress flag, the Working Committee approved of its adoption. On 22 July, therefore, Nehru presented the flag of free India to the Constituent Assembly and explained the variation in the new flag from the flag of the Congress. The colours were the same. But the *charkha* of the Con-

gress flag, which symbolized the common man, the masses, and their industry, and which had been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, was being replaced by the symbol of the *chakra*, which could represent the wheel of the *charkha*, yet carry a much deeper significance. Moving the resolution, Nehru said:

Resolved that the national flag of India shall be a horizontal tricolour of deep saffron, white and dark green, in equal proportion. In the centre of the white band, there shall be a wheel in navy blue to represent the *charkha*. The design of the wheel shall be that of the wheel, *chakra*, which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath pillar of Asoka.¹²⁷

For a time the new national flag became the subject of several interpretations in Congress circles. In the opinion of some, 'the flag that was at one time the Congress flag has now become the national flag'. To some others, 'the original flag has vanished for ever'. Yet, to some others 'the new flag is merely an improvement upon the original one. The spinning wheel has its undoubted honoured place on it.' Gandhi put an end to all such talk by presenting one of the finest definitions of the values which the national flag symbolized. He wrote:

Some will recall through the wheel the name of that Prince of Peace, Asoka, the founder of an empire, who ultimately gave up the pomp and the circumstance of power to become the undisputed emperor of the hearts of men, and became the representative of all the then known faiths. We would call it a legitimate interpretation of the wheel to seek in it the Wheel of Law ascribed to that living store of mercy and love.

The spinning wheel, thus interpreted, adds to its importance in the life of billions of mankind. To liken it to and to derive it from the Asoka disc is to recognise in the insignificant-looking *charkha* the necessity of obeying the ever-moving wheel of the Divine Law of Love.¹²⁸

The day of independence was drawing nearer. Its approach brought to Congressmen everywhere, and more specifically to Congress ministers in Indian provinces, as well as to prospective ministers of the partitioned provinces, the realization that independence brought grave risks and grave responsibilities. Gandhi was getting more and more concerned about the role of the Congress in the days ahead. He was constantly urging a searching of hearts in rising to the occasion. Gradually reconciling himself to the evil of partition, the mahatma had to console himself with the thought that, out of that evil would come some good. He was alert to the fact that the whole of Asia, and particularly the nations of South-east Asia, looked to India at that time for leadership and inspiration. Describing to Campbell-Johnson, who met the mahatma on 30 July in the Bhangi Colony, how 'with the casting off of British

domination the most tremendous responsibility had been thrown upon the Congress leaders', he said: 'The whole world is looking to us. India is under the microscope.'¹²⁹

The tragedy of the moment was the spectre of violence that overtook the Punjab and Bengal on the eve of partition. The government, the Congress High Command and Gandhi were deeply disturbed over the growing mass hysteria and preparation by certain sections for armed strife. Nehru apprehended one of the worst flare-ups in the city of Calcutta which a year earlier had witnessed the 'Great Killing' and which, indeed, set the trigger for violence in other places. Since the city was definitely coming to India under the Radcliffe Award, a deliberate destruction of Calcutta was feared as the most likely strategy of the Muslim League leaders, who had enjoyed power in Bengal and maintained their private forces to create disturbances. Nehru was informed by the prospective Premier of West Bengal, P.C. Ghosh, about what the Suhrawardy administration was doing and Nehru advised the viceroy:

In the event of the situation deteriorating in Calcutta there will be immediate repercussions in other parts of Bengal, notably East Bengal. The tragic events that happened in Noakhali late last year followed Calcutta happenings. Calcutta thus becomes the key to the situation and has to be fully protected from the possibility of any disturbance.¹³⁰

The Bengal Congress was more or less happy that the Boundary Commission was not going very much against their interests, even though they were not getting some areas to which they had laid claim. But, on the other hand, the League was getting desperate at what the Radcliffe Award was likely to give them. This was an additional factor to cause concern about Calcutta since a substantial number of Calcutta's Muslims were still being led to believe that the city would either belong to Eastern Bengal or be made an international zone. The viceroy no doubt tried to obtain pledges from both the future governments of divided Bengal to accept the award with grace, whatever it might be. But, such pledges were to be of no avail when Calcutta was being denied to Muslims.

On 30 July, Mountbatten visited Calcutta for arranging precautionary measures against the apprehended holocaust. He met the governor and the other four members of the Separation Council, namely, Shaheed Suhrawardy and Khwaja Nazimuddin for the Muslim side and Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Dhirendra Narayan Mukherjee representing the Congress. He also met P.C. Ghosh and Suhrawardy separately. Maintenance of peace was the chief concern, and the ultimate hope of all concerned rested on the army. Mountbatten, therefore, discussed the problem with Lt.-General Tuker, G.O.C. in C., Eastern Command, and Major General Ranking, G.O.C., Bengal and Assam. He wanted to

know if 'there was confidence that the military authorities could deal with any disturbances which are likely to take place in Calcutta'. In reply, Ranking could guarantee the protection of only the 'heart' of the centre of the city, namely, the areas around the Government House. Tucker felt 'there was a possibility of larger disturbances in and around Calcutta than ever before'.¹³¹ Besides Calcutta, there were other sensitive places like Noakhali, preparing for carnage. The viceroy clearly saw that ensuring peace in Calcutta, with its teeming population and its labyrinthine lanes and alleys in which military operation was impracticable, was not within the power of the army. And, echoes of any riots in Calcutta were sure to resound elsewhere. With gloomy forebodings, Mountbatten returned from Bengal, fearful of the discredit that awaited his administration at the time of the British departure.

The Boundary Commission could unhesitatingly separate the Hindu-majority areas of Midnapore, Bankura, Hooghly, Howrah and Burdwan from the Muslim-majority areas of Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera, Dacca, Mymensingh, Pabna and Bogra. But there were disputed areas as well. The Hindus went on protesting against the transfer of Khulna and the Chittagong Hill Tracts to East Bengal, while the Muslims bitterly resented the loss of Calcutta, Murshidabad, and a part of the Nadia district. On the whole, however, the Bengal Congress could derive satisfaction from one fact, that while out of Bengal's total Muslim population only 16 per cent remained in West Bengal, 42 per cent of the non-Muslims remained in East Bengal. If, therefore, East Bengal got a larger territory under the Radcliffe Award, the Congress had not much reason to grudge it.

By 12 August, the Radcliffe Award in respect of Bengal was ready, though not announced. 'When you have carved up the Province,' said Bengal's governor, Frederick Burrows, to Cyril Radcliffe, 'two things will happen. First, there will be absolute bloody murder. Second, East Bengal will become a rural slum.'¹³²

In the Punjab, the political horizon was getting darker day by day. After having agreed to a truncated Pakistan, Jinnah adopted a ruthless attitude towards the Sikhs in particular who inhabited Western Punjab in large number and possessed substantial resources in land and trade. He was reported to have told one of his trusted friends, Nawab Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani, that 'the Sikhs could go to the devil in their own way. It was they who had demanded the partition of the Punjab. They could now take the consequences.'¹³³ The two million Sikhs who belonged to West Punjab were never regarded by Jinnah as future citizens of Pakistan. Instead of giving them any assurance about their future safety, he issued indirect threats which would undermine their confidence and lead them to pack up and leave Pakistan.

It was quite clear to those who observed the Punjab situation closely that the moment the Sikhs were driven out from the west, the Muslims would suffer the same fate in the eastern half of the province. 'Once a line of division is drawn in the Punjab,' confided a senior police officer to Penderel Moon, 'all Sikhs to the west of it and all Muslims to the east of it will have their — chopped off'.¹³⁴

It was in this atmosphere that Radcliffe was deciding the fate of the Punjab by his line of division. While the Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority areas were clear on the demographic map, Lahore Division was the bone of contention between the contending parties. The city of Lahore, the largest in the Punjab, itself contained 6 lakhs of Muslims as against 5 lakh Hindus and 1 lakh Sikhs. Only thirty-five miles to its east was situated the second largest city of the province and the holiest place of the Sikhs, Amritsar, having the most sacred shrine of Sikhism, the Golden Temple. Ironically enough, till the day of independence the Hindus and the Sikhs believed that the Radcliffe Award would give the city of Lahore to India while the Muslims believed that the whole Division would go to Pakistan.

In fact, the partition of the Punjab appeared to Radcliffe almost impossible for various reasons. From the religious point of view, the Muslim areas of the west contained numerous holy shrines of the Sikhs. From the economic point of view, the Punjab was indivisible for its integrated river and canal systems had been designed for the whole region. For example, the rivers supplying the water belonged to the East, but the lands receiving the water belonged to the West. Radcliffe thought of joint control over the total water-system. But Jinnah rejected the proposal since he would not depend on 'Hindu mercy' for getting water for Pakistan. Helplessly, therefore, Radcliffe drew his line, irrespective of the consequences that were to affect the places of pilgrimage, sources of irrigation, economic activities or urban habitations. Keeping the awards secret till after independence came and he left India, Radcliffe gave to East Punjab the whole of Jullundur and Ambala Divisions, and the Amritsar district of the Lahore Division together with a few tahsils of the Gurdaspur and Lahore districts. East Punjab was given control over three of the five rivers, namely, the Beas, Sutlej and the upper waters of the Ravi. About 38 per cent of the territory and 45 per cent of the population were assigned to East Punjab. West Punjab got the rest. While the Muslims were denied the entire Lahore Division, the Sikhs and Hindus lost the city of Lahore, and the Sikhs in particular lost their canal colonies of Sheikhpora, Lyallpur and Montgomery.

Though the award was kept a closely guarded secret, in the areas which were indisputably to belong to Pakistan and India, there was an explosion of communal frenzy as independence approached. A peaceful

and smooth transfer of population from minority to majority areas of the respective communities was rendered a vain dream. It was by violence that the majority at most places decided to drive out or eliminate the minority. While the Punjab thus prepared for an unprecedented blood-bath, the viceroy could think only in terms of force to contain the devastation.

In the last week of July, the viceroy and the Partition Council decided to set up a Boundary Force of more than fifty thousand men, mainly composed of mixed units and under 'a high proportion of British Officers' to operate in the Punjab partition areas in order to face the violence following the Boundary Commission's awards. It was placed under Major-General T.W. Rees, an army officer of repute and distinction, with a good record of previous experience. This force was said to be 'the largest military force ever collected in any one area of a country for the maintenance of law and order in peace-time'. Nobody could anticipate at that moment that the level of Punjab violence would be overwhelming for a force of even that size or even for any bigger force, when battles were fought in every village and town through days and nights, over as extensive an area as the Punjab was.

The viceroy, however, felt satisfied that the Punjab Boundary Force would prove itself an adequate protection against the pre- and post-partition disturbances. His attention was next centred on Calcutta where he anticipated violence on an even larger scale than in the Punjab. The city's numberless, inaccessible and intricate lanes, by-lanes and alleyways, and its limitless slums containing lakhs of people of rival communities as well as the thickly populated bazars everywhere, were the likely arenas of communal battle where any number of troops would be ineffective. In a fatalistic mood, Mountbatten mused, 'if Calcutta goes up in flames, well it just goes up in flames'.

Much more concerned and distressed was Mahatma Gandhi when the month of August opened. On his way back from Kashmir on 4 August, he visited the Punjab when the suffering of the people was beginning to mount up. Around Pindi he saw thousands of refugees in a camp at Wah. They wanted to get to India before 15 August to escape death in Pakistan. Gandhi, who had advised the Congress Government in Delhi and in the Indian provinces to give equal treatment to all communities, still fondly hoped that the same ethical standard would be followed in Pakistan. He, therefore, advised the Hindus and the Sikhs in a prayer gathering at Wah on 5 August that since the Muslims had got their Pakistan, they should have no quarrel with the minority communities, and, therefore, the Hindus and Sikhs should give up their fear and stay on in their ancestral homes. He was not prepared to believe that the Muslims would do them any harm. At the Panja Saheb, he listened to

distressing accounts from Sikhs about the dangers that threatened them and their faith, and said:

Every faith is on its trial in India. God is the infallible judge and the world which is His creation will judge Muslim leaders not according to their pledges and promises, but according to the deeds of these leaders and their followers. What I have said of the Muslim leaders is also true of the leaders and followers of other faiths.

Gandhi, like others, was also expecting greater troubles in Bengal, particularly in East Bengal, where the minority community was in desperate fear about their survival. The horrifying situation in the areas of Western Pakistan had so depressed him by then that he decided within himself to return to the west after his mission in the east. He also arrived at a decision to spend the rest of his life in Pakistan, 'May be in East Bengal or West Punjab or perhaps the Frontier Province.' He told the Congress workers on Lahore Station before leaving the Punjab: 'My present place is in Noakhali, and I would go there even if I have to die. But as soon as I am free from Noakhali, I will come to the Punjab. I hope to be free from Noakhali very soon.'¹³⁵ When he heard about the evacuation of the city of Lahore by Hindus and Sikhs, he felt for them deeply and left for them a message of courage: 'I must say this should not be so. If you think Lahore is dead or dying, do not run away from it but die with what you think is dying in Lahore.'¹³⁶

It was a moral commitment on part of the Mahatma to stand by the helpless minorities in Eastern Bengal in their hour of need. Ever since his historic peace mission early in the year in troubled Noakhali, his heart was with the horror-stricken people of that remote region. There was the Boundary Force for the Punjab, but no force was visualized for places like Noakhali. Gandhi decided to risk his life to save the unfortunate inhabitants there.

Gandhi had no desire to be in Delhi when independence was declared. He, therefore, took a train straight from Lahore to Patna, from where he intended to proceed to Noakhali via Calcutta. He stopped at Patna on 8 August and advised the people of Bihar to spend the day of independence in prayer, fasting and sacrificial spinning. The next day Gandhi arrived in Calcutta.

Gandhi's stay in Calcutta was to have been brief. At Sodepur Ashram that day the chief minister of the newly formed cabinet for West Bengal and the leader of the West Bengal Assembly Congress Party, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, met the mahatma to tell him about the situation in the city. An anxious governor, Frederick Burrows, also invited him to discuss Calcutta. In the evening, a prominent Muslim League leader and ex-mayor of the city, Mohammad Usman, met him to say how panicky

the Muslims of Calcutta were in fear of Hindu vengeance. Throughout the day, Gandhi heard the 'tales of woe of the Muslims' and felt they were a reflection on the bona-fides of the new Congress Ministry. 'The hour of test has arrived,' he cautioned the Ministry in his prayer meeting that evening:

You will now have to show the full measure your non-violent courage to the world. I will not be a living witness of India's reversion to slavery, which will be her lot, if the Hindu-Muslim quarrel continues, but my spirit will weep over the tragedy even from beyond the grave. My prayer is that God will spare us that calamity.¹³⁷

The governor had requested Gandhi to stay on in Calcutta in the desperate hope that his presence might change the atmosphere of violence, but he declined. Yet he made an assessment of the Muslim fear arising out of the withdrawal of almost all Muslim officers and personnel from the West Bengal administration and police force, as well as the departure of the League leaders to East Bengal, leaving the common Muslims, as they felt, to the mercy of Hindu officers and the police who were expected to behave in the same way as their Muslim counterparts during the League regime had done. Coercion by the Hindu majority of the minority was thus thought to be a natural phenomenon. On 10 August, a large Muslim deputation met Gandhi to appeal to him to stay in Calcutta saying: 'We Muslims have as much claim upon you as the Hindus. For you yourself have said you are as much of Muslims as of Hindus.'

'I am willing,' replied Gandhi, 'but then you will have to guarantee the peace of Noakhali. If I do not go to Noakhali before the 15th on the strength of your guarantee, and things go wrong there my life will become forfeit; you will have to face a fast unto death on my part.'¹³⁸

It was a timely deal which the mahatma struck. On behalf of the Muslim League and themselves, the leaders of the Muslim community in Calcutta decided to send their emissaries to Noakhali to prevail upon the League leaders and the organizers of the previous riots in Noakhali to maintain communal harmony and peace in the entire region so that the Mahatma could stay in Calcutta to save the Muslims from what was certain to be a terrible massacre.

So, Gandhi stayed on in that most volcanic city till the day of independence came and passed. It was as imperative for him to stand by the Muslims as by the Hindus, and by adopting the course, he did, and that, too, at that crucial moment, he showed once again how deep was his love for the Muslims. The viceroy at Delhi and the governor in Calcutta felt immensely relieved at Gandhi's decision.

No less relieved was Gandhi's foremost foe in Bengal, Shaheed

Suhrawardy. As the prime author of the Great Calcutta Killing and as the League Premier of undivided Bengal, he had been a relentless critic of Gandhi, and had poured out much venom against him while in power, but after having lost Calcutta for Pakistan and having been rejected by his own party as the prospective Chief Minister of East Pakistan after partition, Suhrawardy was suffering intense mental agony concerning the danger facing his co-religionists. He was still the *de jure* Premier of Bengal in those last few days before independence, and to him Gandhi's presence in Calcutta was nothing less than providential. He, too, stood guarantee for the safety of the Hindus in East Bengal so that Calcutta could be spared a grim tragedy. And, having finally decided not to go to Noakhali, Gandhi asked the League premier to stay with him and work for communal peace. Knowing fully well how deeply the Calcutta Hindus disliked and hated him, Suhrawardy nevertheless agreed.

On 13 August, the Mahatma shifted from Sodepur to Beliaghata, one of the most sensitive and overcrowded spots of the city, strife-torn, congested and filthy, with a mixed population of rival communities, already prepared for killing each other. There, inside a ruined and deserted Muslim house known as Hydari Mansion, Gandhi fixed his abode to wait for the dawn of independence. 'I have got stuck here and am now going to undertake a grave risk. Suhrawardy and I are going from today to stay together in a Muslim quarter. The future will reveal itself,' he informed Sardar Patel on 13 August. The same day Patel wrote back:

So you have got detained in Calcutta and that too in a quarter which is a veritable shambles and a notorious den of gangsters and hooligans. And in what choice company too! It is a terrible risk. But more than that, will your health stand the strain? I am afraid, it must be terribly filthy there. Keep me posted about yourself.¹³⁹

Violent crowds of Hindus mobbed the Hydari Mansion knowing that Gandhi was there to save the Muslims, and that, too, together with that arch-enemy of the Hindus, Shaheed Suhrawardy. 'Why did you not go to places from where the Hindus have fled?' they challenged Gandhi furiously, and screamed, 'Suhrawardy, go back!' Stones were showered on the house as angry mobs began to swell. But, unmoved, Gandhi began to reason with them:

I was on my way to Noakhali where your own kith and kin desired my presence. But I now see that I shall have to serve Noakhali only from here. You must understand that I have come here to serve not only Muslims but Hindus, Muslims and all alike. Those who are indulging in brutalities are bringing disgrace upon themselves and the religion they represent. I am

going to put myself under your protection. You are welcome to turn against me and play the opposite role if you so choose. I have nearly reached the end of my life's journey. I have not much farther to go. But let me tell you that if you again go mad, I will not be a living witness to it. I have given the same ultimatum to the Muslims of Noakhali also; I have earned the right. Before there is another outbreak of Muslim madness in Noakhali, they will find me dead.¹⁴⁰

The Hindus got the meaning of Gandhi's peace mission. As the hours passed and Gandhi's messages were continuously passed on to the people at large, a new atmosphere suddenly began to descend on the city. Congressmen in great numbers came to visit the Hydari Mansion in endless streams and bands of volunteers spread out to otherwise fearful localities to preach the message of amity. Gandhi's desire to fast and die in case of violence had to be taken seriously by all sections of people, and the life of the Mahatma became the concern of all, particularly when the destiny of the nation was being moulded by him at that turning point of history. After all, to every Indian he was the Father of the Nation, and the chief architect of independence. At that moment of his supreme achievement his wishes could neither be dishonoured nor disobeyed. Thus Calcutta quickly came under the spell of the Mahatma and changed its explosive character rather dramatically and quite unexpectedly. As countless men and women of all persuasions continued to make their pilgrimage to the Hydari Mansion, anger and excitement started dying down, yielding to a new spirit of fraternity that came to prevail. On 14 August, Gandhi said to his evening prayer congregation:

From tomorrow we shall be delivered from the bondage of the British rule. But from midnight today, India will be partitioned too. While, therefore, tomorrow will be a day of rejoicing, it will be a day of sorrow as well. It will throw a heavy burden of responsibility upon us. Let us pray to God that He may give us strength to bear it worthily. Let all those Muslims who were forced to flee return to their homes. If two millions of Hindus and Muslims are at daggers drawn with one another in Calcutta, with what face can I go to Noakhali and plead the cause of the Hindus with the Muslims there? And if the flames of communal strife envelop the whole country, how can our newborn freedom survive?¹⁴¹

On that day, 14 August, the capital of India counted the minutes for the approach of midnight, when 15 August would herald the dawn of independence. The attention of all was engaged on the Hall of the Constituent Assembly, where were to be enacted the scenes of the historic events signifying the end of the British empire and the birth of free India. Rajendra Prasad, as the President of the Constituent Assembly, opened the proceedings by recalling the services and sacrifices of

innumerable men and women who had fought and suffered for the cause, and by paying tribute to Mahatma Gandhi who had been the beacon light, the guide and the philosopher during the struggle for freedom for a long thirty years. In stirring words, on that unique occasion, Jawaharlal Nehru addressed the assembly saying:

Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly, or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will wake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity. . . . We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an offering of opportunity to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us.¹⁴²

As midnight came and the clock struck twelve, amid the blowing of a conch, the Assembly stood up and took the pledge:

At this solemn moment when the people of India through suffering and sacrifice, have secured freedom, I, a member of the Constituent Assembly of India, do dedicate myself in all humility to the service of India and her people to the end that this ancient land attain her rightful place in the world and make her full and willing contribution to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind.¹⁴³

The pledge having been taken, the President announced that 'the Constituent Assembly of India has assumed power for the governance of India.'

After independence was declared, the assembly adopted a resolution inviting Lord Louis Mountbatten to become the first constitutional Governor-General of free India. The invitation was communicated to him the same night by the President of the Assembly, Rajendra Prasad and the Prime Minister, Nehru.

That night, as India's Prime Minister, Nehru gave his message to the nation, describing the significance of that great event and reminding the people of the responsibilities and burdens which freedom brought. 'We have hard work ahead,' he said.

There is no resting for anyone of us, till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India, what destiny intended them to be. We are citizens of a great country, on the verge of bold advance, and we have to live up to that high standard. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India, with equal rights, privileges and

obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.¹⁴⁴

On behalf of free India, the Prime Minister extended greetings to the nations and peoples of the world, assuring India's co-operation in furthering peace, freedom and democracy. And, paying his reverential tribute to Gandhi, he said:

On this day, our first thoughts go to the architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation who, embodying the old spirit of India, held aloft the torch of freedom and lighted up the darkness that surround us. We have often been unworthy followers of his, and we have strayed from his message, but not only we, but the succeeding generations, will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility. We shall never allow that torch of freedom to be blown out however high the wind or stormy the tempest.¹⁴⁵

As 15 August, the first day of independence, dawned, after India had attained freedom at midnight, memorable scenes of formal ceremonies followed one after another to the joyous excitement of myriads of people. At 8.30 in the morning, the Governor General of free India made his state entry into the Durbar Hall where the Chief Justice of India performed the swearing-in ceremony of the new governor general. In due solemnity, thereafter, the latter administered to Jawaharlal Nehru the oath of office as India's Prime Minister. Other ministers were also sworn in.

'From today,' declared Mountbatten in his address to the assembly, 'I am your constitutional Governor General and I would ask you to regard me as one of yourselves, devoted wholly to the furtherance of India's interests.' And, in a touching reference to Gandhi he said: 'At this historic hour let us not forget all that India owes to Mahatma Gandhi, the architect of her freedom through non-violence.'¹⁴⁶

The spectacle and pageant which Delhi witnessed that day were symbolic of the people's inner joy at the victory they had won at last. For Gandhi in Calcutta, the day brought an inner satisfaction for the peace the people observed and the feeling of communal amity they demonstrated. But it was also a day of solemn thought for him concerning what freedom meant for all. The Congress had fought and succeeded in demolishing the British-Indian Empire, but it was going to be a stupendous task to raise the structure of the new Indian Republic. A sombre feeling overcame Gandhi, lest the legacies of imperial rule might adversely affect the virtues and simplicities expected of a republic. That

day, therefore, he told the ministers of the West Bengal cabinet who came to seek his blessings.

From today you have to wear the crown of thorns. Strive ceaselessly to cultivate truth and non-violence. Be humble. Be forbearing. The British rule no doubt put you on your mettle. But now you will be tested through and through. Beware of power; power corrupts. Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry. Remember, you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages. May God help you.¹⁴⁷

Gandhi's message of that day was meant for all Congressmen in power everywhere. He hoped, too, that Indian nationalism would triumph over the demon of communalism once independence had come. News reached him about what was happening in the city of Lahore in those very hours to cause deep anguish and sorrow in his mind. But he expressed his faith in his evening prayer before a mass of humanity that 'the noble example of Calcutta, if it was sincere, would affect the Punjab and other parts of India'. Addressing the gathering, and referring to the gloomy forebodings that Hindu-Muslim unity was an impossibility in India, Suhrawardy paid his tribute to Gandhi for the great fraternity he ushered in, saying, 'by God's will and Mahatmaji's *kripa* [grace] what only three or four days before was considered an impossibility has miraculously turned into a fact.'¹⁴⁸

It was a miracle which only a Gandhi could have performed. When hundreds of thousands were falling dead in the cities and villages of the Punjab and millions of people were running away as refugees to save their life, Calcutta and Bengal exhibited a rare sanity which astonished the world. 'Gandhiji has achieved many things,' commented Raja-gopalachari, 'but there has been nothing . . . which is so truly wonderful, as his victory over evil in Calcutta.' And a grateful Mountbatten wrote to Gandhi: 'In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large-scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man, and there is no rioting. As a serving officer, as well as an administrator, may I be allowed to pay my tribute to the one-man boundary force!'¹⁴⁹

The victory of Gandhi was a victory of India's soul force over the two-nation theory to which the National Congress had never subscribed even when partition became inevitable. In the broader perspective of history, the Congress emerged at independence with greater determination to uphold and strengthen the ideals which had sustained the organization for six decades.

The coming of independence marked the end of a long era in the history of the Indian National Congress. It also opened new vistas for the future for that great organization and new roles to play.

Notes and References

ABBREVIATIONS

AICC	All-India Congress Committee
CWMG	Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi
CWC	Congress Working Committee
ENC. INC	Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress
HC	House of Commons
IOL	India Office Library and Records (London)
MAHATMA	Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, D.G. Tendulkar
MB	Mountbatten Papers (as abbreviated on Files of Broadland Archives)
MG	Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, Pyarelal
PP	Parliamentary Papers
SS	Secretary of State for India
SWJN	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
TP	Transfer of Power, Volumes 1942-7
WVJ	Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal

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Chapter XI

Foreign Policy in the Making

Bimal Prasad

RIGHT FROM ITS BIRTH the Indian National Congress had been taking interest in matters related to foreign affairs. At first limited, this interest gradually became wider with the corresponding widening of its general political horizons. As it began to work openly for the attainment of complete freedom from British rule, it also began to express its views on various issues before the world at large. This was based on the assumption that free India must play an independent and active role in world affairs in order to further the causes of peace and freedom in all parts of the world. Such an assumption became particularly strong between 1920 and 1947 when the Congress functioned under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership. For Gandhi always emphasized that free India would have a particular mission in the world — the mission of spreading the message of peace and goodwill among all nations.

The most significant contribution to the evolution of Congress thinking on world affairs was made by Jawaharlal Nehru who, beginning with 1927, not merely took a keen interest in world affairs but also saw a close relationship between them and the Indian struggle for freedom. Thus by the time India emerged as an independent country in 1947 there had also developed a rich heritage of ideas on world affairs. This became the main foundation of India's foreign policy. This was at the back of Nehru's mind when he observed, while explaining the background of India's foreign policy in one of his speeches in 1952: 'Our policy, as I have repeatedly said, has grown out of our past way of thinking and our declarations and I do claim that, in so far as we could in the changed circumstances, we have stuck to those declarations and ways of thinking'.¹

1. Early Congress Interest in Foreign Policy Issues (1885-1920)

As is well known, the Congress in its early years did not challenge Britain's right to rule over India, but confined itself to asking for admini-

strative, economic and constitutional reforms with a view to ameliorating the conditions of the Indian people and providing them with opportunities for increasing participation in the administration of their country. In keeping with this general political outlook, the Congress in its early years did not generally challenge Britain's right to formulate the nature of India's role in world affairs and also considered it its duty to stand by Britain when the latter was pitted against another European power. At the same time, however, right from the beginning it opposed the use of India's resources for British expansionist purposes across India's borders and repeatedly declared that India had no interest in an expansionist policy and wanted to live at peace with its neighbours. The Congress also voiced its fears that Britain's use of Indian resources for its expansionist policy might embroil India in unnecessary foreign entanglements. Such pronouncements must be considered as the first steps in the making of a distinctive Indian outlook on foreign policy.

Thus the very first session of the Congress, held in December 1885, adopted a resolution deprecating the annexation of Upper Burma to the British Indian Empire and suggesting that, if the British Government was not prepared to abandon annexation, the whole of Burma should be separated from the Indian administration and constituted into a crown colony. The main ground for opposing annexation was, of course, the fear that it would lead to an increased tax burden on India, but there was also implicit in it a dislike for the policy of conquest of any territory outside India. This is borne out by the remarks of Pherozeshah Mehta, the mover of the resolution, while responding to the debate on it. One of the speakers wondered whether it was necessary to retain the earlier portion of the resolution deprecating the move for annexation and asserted that the purpose of the Congress might be served by pointing out that, if annexation was carried out, such a decision should not in any way affect India. Mehta, however, rejected this suggestion on the ground that its adoption might indicate that the Congress opposition to the policy of annexation was weaker than it really was.² At the Congress session of 1891, Dinshaw Wacha again referred to the forcible seizure of Upper Burma and on that account described 1885 as a calamitous year for India. He feared that the British policy of expansion beyond the north-eastern frontier of India might involve the latter in a clash with China and disastrously increase its financial burdens.³

The British Indian Government followed a still more expansionist policy across the north-west frontier of India and sent expeditions there year after year. Behind this policy lay the assumption that Russia wanted to expand in the direction of India and the one way to prevent it was for the British themselves to occupy all the vantage points near India's north-western borders, or, at least, establish their dominant influence there. Being then attached to British rule and not in any way

inclined to change it for the Russian, the Congress at its very first session announced its unreserved support to Britain in the event of a Russian invasion of India.⁴ However, the Congress did not treat the talk of such an invasion as being based on truth and consistently opposed the increase in Indian military expenditure which was generally justified by the Government on the ground of a threat to India's security posed by Russian expansion in Central Asia. Thus when, in 1885, the Government of India desired to increase the strength of the Indian Army by thirty thousand men, involving an additional expenditure of two million pounds, the first Congress session opposed it as unnecessary and excessive.⁵ The Seventh Congress session, 1891, mentioned 'the extravagant cost' of military administration as one of the causes of the poverty of the Indian people and suggested various ways of reducing it.⁶ Speaking on that resolution Dinshaw Wacha asserted that to go beyond the frontier of India was to court disaster. Although Government spokesmen maintained that the forward policy across India's north-western frontiers was necessitated by Russia's advance in Central Asia, Wacha charged that it was the Government of India which, under one pretext or another, had first initiated aggression. He ended his speech with a strong plea for a complete abandonment of the forward policy, describing it as 'a policy of external aggression pure and simple'.⁷ Following the annexation of Chitral in 1895, the forward policy was again subjected to severe criticism at the eleventh session of the Congress held in that year. Surendranath Banerjea, in the course of his presidential address, opposed the annexation of Chitral on moral as well as financial grounds. He warned the Government that the true frontier against the much-talked-of Russian invasion did not lie in some remote inaccessible mountain which had yet to be discovered, but deep in the grateful hearts of a loyal and contented people.⁸ Following the lead of the president the Congress adopted a resolution demanding that the expenses of all expeditions sent beyond the frontiers of India be shared between Britain and India.⁹ C. Sankaran Nair, president of the thirteenth Congress session, 1897, again subjected the forward policy across the north-western frontier to severe criticism and declared that the true Indian policy was a peaceful policy. Indians had little, if anything, to expect from conquests. With such capacity for internal development as their country possessed, with such a crying need to carry out the reforms absolutely necessary for their well-being, they wanted a period of prolonged peace. Besides, they had no complaint against their neighbours either on their north-west or their north-east frontier. Therefore, if ever India was involved in war, it would be solely due to the British policy of aggrandisement.¹⁰ The Congress adopted a resolution expressing its deep and earnest conviction that the frontier policy of the government injured the best interests of the country and should be

abandoned. If, however, the Government considered it necessary to send military expeditions beyond India's frontiers, they being for British imperial purposes, the major portion of the expenditure involved should come from the British exchequer.¹¹ The president of the next Congress session, Ananda Mohan Bose, declared: 'Much as I believe in the principle of division of labour, I do not believe in that division, which, in these imperial matters, would make England decide the policy and India bear the cost.'¹²

With the arrival of Lord Curzon as the Viceroy of India in 1899 there came about a change in the frontier policy of the government. It gave up the practice of sending frequent expeditions beyond the north-west frontier and sought to maintain British influence by distributing subsidies among the tribes. This seems to have largely satisfied the Congress and it now ceased to adopt resolutions against the government's frontier policy. Curzon's viceroyalty (1899-1905), however, coincided with a further intensification of the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia. The British Government, ever alert to any threat to the security of its Indian empire and not kindly disposed towards the extension of any hostile influence in its vicinity, sought to forestall Russia by extending and strengthening British influence in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. As the Congress was opposed to any policy of intervention in the affairs of another country, it came out strongly against Curzon's policy, particularly when he sent the famous Younghusband expedition to Tibet in 1903-4. In his presidential address to the Congress session of 1904, Sir Henry Cotton declared that every member of the Congress unreservedly condemned that expedition and described it as an 'act of wanton violence and aggression'.¹³ The Congress adopted a resolution regretting that the British Government had not deemed it fit to contribute even a portion of the cost of the Younghusband expedition, even though it had been undertaken to further British imperial interests. More significantly, it went on to declare that the despatch of an expedition against Tibet was not an isolated event, but part of a general forward policy which, together with the missions to Afghanistan and Persia, was likely to 'involve India in foreign entanglements', thereby placing an intolerable burden on the Indian finances and proving disastrous to the interests of the country.¹⁴

The Anglo-Russian rivalry gradually slackened and the two powers settled their differences in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet through the Convention of 1907, but there arose new problems connected with foreign policy and they received the attention of the Congress. Beginning with 1908 Indian Muslims felt much disturbed by the trend of British policy towards Turkey and Persia. The fate of Turkey particularly excited them, for as the Caliph, the Turkish Sultan was considered the

head of all Muslims wherever they might be living. Although the Congress at that time did not take any direct interest in this matter, its leaders did consider it their duty to express their sympathy with Turkey largely as a gesture of goodwill towards their Muslim brethren in India. Thus at the annual Congress session of 1912, its president, R.N. Mudholkar, referred to the profound sorrow and sympathy which all non-Muslim Indians felt for their Muslim countrymen because of the misfortunes of the Caliphate and the struggle for existence of the Turkish Empire against a powerful combination in the Balkan wars. He hoped that it might be possible to satisfy the just and legitimate aspirations of the Christian provinces of the Turkish Empire without destroying the latter's existence or making it powerless.¹⁵ The president of the next Congress session, Nawab Syed Mohammed, a Muslim himself, again referred to the troubles of the Muslim world outside India and the anxiety caused by them among Muslims inside India.¹⁶

On the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, some Indian nationalists known as revolutionaries, intensified their efforts, both in India and abroad, to organize rebellions in various places against British rule, though not with much success. The great body of Indian nationalists, as represented by the Congress, however, wholeheartedly supported the British war effort against Germany. When the Congress met at Madras for its annual session in the last week of December 1914, it declared its profound devotion to the British throne, its unswerving allegiance to the British connection and its firm resolve to stand by the Empire, 'at all hazards, and at all costs'.¹⁷ By another resolution it expressed satisfaction and gratitude at the despatch of the Indian Expeditionary Force to the theatre of war and thanked the Government for thus offering the Indian people an opportunity to show their preparedness to fight shoulder to shoulder with the people of other parts of the Empire in defence of right and justice and the cause of the Empire.¹⁸ Such resolutions continued to be adopted by the Congress from year to year till the end of the war.

Needless to add, the Congress supported the British war effort because of a feeling among its leaders that it was their duty, as loyal subjects, to stand by Britain in its hour of need and that the performance of that duty would hasten India's march towards self-government within the British Empire. For Britain had declared that it was fighting the war in order to safeguard justice and democracy and the Congress leaders naturally thought that these principles would be applied to India also. Gandhi, who worked with the greatest devotion to help in the British war effort, beautifully summed up the Indian nationalist position in course of a letter to the viceroy in 1918. He recognized that in the hour of its danger Indians must give, as they had decided to give, ungrudging and unequivocal support to the empire of which they aspired, in the

near future, to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions. He, however, thought it fit to point out the simple truth that their response was due to the expectation that their goal would be reached all the more speedily. Theirs was thus a consecration based on hope of a better future. 'I should be untrue to you and to my country,' he concluded, 'if I did not clearly and unequivocally tell you what that hope is. I do not bargain for its fulfilment, but you should know that disappointment of hope means disillusion.'¹⁹

The end of the war found India in a state of excitement and unrest. The tempo of political activity accelerated. The great Indian contribution in men and money to the Allied victory, openly acknowledged by British statesmen, had made the educated classes conscious of their country's importance in the world. The repeated declarations by Allied leaders, particularly by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, that the war was being fought to safeguard democracy and self-determination had raised their hopes. On the other hand, the government's efforts to suppress militant nationalist activity even while it talked of substantial steps towards the establishment of responsible government in India had made them suspicious of its true intentions. The Congress, being the most representative organization of the Indian people, reflected their hopes and aspirations in the new situation. In 1918-19, it still spoke partly in the old tone, but a new note was also discernible in its proceedings.

Thus the annual Congress session held in December 1918, continuing the old tradition, 'most respectfully' conveyed to His Majesty, the King-Emperor, its deep loyalty and profound devotion to the throne, and its congratulations on the successful termination of the war which, in its opinion, had been waged for the freedom of all the peoples of the world. By another resolution it recorded its profound appreciation of 'the brilliant gallantry of the Allied Forces and particularly of the heroic achievements of the Indian troops in the cause of freedom, justice and self-determination'.²⁰ At the same time, the Delhi Congress session did strike a new note and demanded India's representation at the Peace Conference at Paris through elected representatives at par with that of the self-governing Dominions. Further, without waiting for this request to be granted, it proceeded to elect its representatives to the Peace Conference. The British Government had, of course, arranged for Indian participation in the Peace Conference, but that had only a formal significance, as the persons nominated for this purpose had been selected by the government without any reference to popular opinion.²¹ This session also for the first time placed the demand for Indian freedom in the context of a world setting and before the whole world, not as heretofore only before the British people. Here it pinned its hopes largely on President Wilson, whom Madan Mohan Malaviya, who presided

over the session, described as 'the great American who has evidently been appointed by God to be the master mason in building the new temple of international justice'. Malaviya included in his address a detailed summary of Wilson's pronouncements concerning the nature of the peace settlement, specifically referring to the famous Fourteen Points, and declared that they had filled all lovers of liberty with gratitude and the hope of a better world.²² Following his lead, the Congress demanded the recognition of India by the British Parliament as also by the Paris Peace Conference as one of the progressive nations to whom the principle of self-determination should be applied.²³

With all this, however, the Congress leaders did not yet feel bold enough to dissociate themselves completely from the interests of the British Empire and chart out a completely independent path of their own in world affairs. Actually, the most advanced and militant among them, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, while looking forward to India's emergence as a leading power in Asia, also visualized her as working for the protection of British interests in this region. What he had in mind comes out clearly in the letter he sent to the president of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919:

It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon the imperative importance of solving the Indian question for the purpose of ensuring the future peace of the world and the progress of the people of India. India is self-contained, harbours no designs upon the integrity of other States, and has no ambition outside India. With her vast area, enormous resources and prodigious population, she may well aspire to be a leading power in Asia, if not in the world. She could, therefore, be a powerful steward of the League of Nations in the East for maintaining the peace of the world and the stability of the British Empire against all aggressors and disturbers of peace, whether in Asia or elsewhere.²⁴

2. Gandhi, Nehru and the Development of an Independent World Outlook (1920-1935)

The subservience to British imperial interests soon vanished as a result of the new orientation of the Congress under Gandhi's leadership in 1920. As it began to work for the emergence of a free India, not of an India with some degree of self-government but tied in essential matters to the apron-strings of Britain, so also it began to think about India's relationship with other countries and to formulate policies towards various developments in the world untrammelled by any consideration for British imperial interests. This process was carried further with the emergence of Jawaharlal Nehru as a prominent figure in the Congress by 1927. Deeply interested in developments all over the world and fully conscious of the interrelationship between them and the developments within India, he began to impress upon his colleagues the necessity of

keeping a close watch on world events and formulating an independent policy towards them in the light of India's own interests and those of the causes she held dear. This gradually led to the evolution of an independent Indian outlook on world affairs, based on the championship of freedom and peace everywhere.

In November 1921 the All India Congress Committee, for the first time, adopted a resolution which was specifically described as a resolution on foreign policy. Drafted by Gandhi and sponsored by the Working Committee it sought to define the foreign policy which free India would like to pursue and can be described as a formal declaration of independence from British foreign policy. Through it the Congress conveyed to the neighbouring and other foreign countries that the Government of India in no way represented Indian opinion and that its policy had been traditionally guided by the consideration of holding India in subjection rather than of protecting her borders. It made it clear that India as a self-governing country would have nothing to fear from the neighbouring states or any other state, as her people had no designs on any of them. India had also no intention of establishing any trade relations hostile to or not desired by the peoples of such states.²⁵ The adoption of such a resolution represented a new development in the history of the Congress and greatly surprised some people who considered it premature and not really necessary. Gandhi's reply to them shows the new outlook of the Congress leadership, and its understanding of the intimate relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy. 'Indeed, while we are making our plans for *swaraj*,' wrote Gandhi, 'we are bound to consider and define our foreign policy. Surely we are bound authoritatively to tell the world what relations we wish to cultivate with it.'²⁶

In seeking freedom from Britain, both in the national and international spheres, and in employing the method of non-cooperation for its achievement, the Congress did not aim at isolation from the Western world. When Rabindranath Tagore complained that there was a strong element of negation in the non-cooperation movement, which might harm India by separating her spiritually from the West, Gandhi assured him that non-cooperation was not intended to erect a Chinese wall between India and the West. On the contrary, it would pave the way to real, voluntary and honourable co-operation based on mutual respect and trust and also enable India to serve the world. 'An India awakened and free,' observed Gandhi, 'has a message of peace and goodwill to a groaning world. Non-cooperation is designed to supply her with a platform from which she will preach the message.'²⁷

While leading the struggle for Indian freedom the Congress naturally extended its sympathy and support to freedom struggles in other parts of

the world. Thus, in 1920, it paid homage to the memory of the Irish patriot, MacSwiney and sent a message of sympathy to the Irish people. Countries in Asia and Africa, particularly Turkey, the Arab countries of West Asia, Egypt, Burma, Sri Lanka and China, received special attention between 1920 and 1927. In regard to all of them the Congress dissociated itself from British policy and supported their struggles for freedom.²⁸ Not content with voicing sympathy with particular Asian countries, the Congress leaders also began to look forward to the emergence of some kind of broad unity among them. Here again Gandhi led the way. 'Common lot no less than territorial homogeneity and cultural affinity,' he wrote in 1920, 'is bringing the Asiatic races wonderfully together, and they now seem determined to take their fullest share in the world politics.'²⁹ In his presidential address to the Congress session of 1922, C.R. Das stressed the need for Indian participation in the Asian federation which he saw emerging as the union of oppressed nationalities of Asia.³⁰ Next year, Mohammad Ali, commended the idea of organizing an Eastern Federation.³¹ In 1926, S. Srinivasa Iyengar reverted to this theme and declared that the time had come for Indians to seriously think of a federation of the Asian peoples for their common welfare.³²

These trends in the Congress outlook on world affairs received a great fillip from Nehru's participation in the International Congress of Oppressed Nationalities, held at Brussels in February 1927. Indeed, this participation must be considered as a landmark in the evolution of the Indian outlook on world affairs. It had a great impact on Nehru and through him on the Indian National Congress.³³ Thus Indian interest in the nationalist movements in the Asian and African countries now became much stronger than before. This development was natural as the Brussels Congress provided the first opportunity for direct contact with their leaders. The Indian interest in China particularly now became stronger. One of the resolutions adopted by the Brussels Congress was in the form of a joint declaration by the Chinese and Indian delegates attending it and looked forward to a revival of the close cultural ties that had united the two countries in the past and to a co-ordination of their struggles against imperialism. Following this, the All India Congress Committee, in May 1927, adopted a resolution expressing sympathy with the Chinese people and reiterating the demand, first made in 1925, for the withdrawal of Indian troops from China. It also decided to send an ambulance corps to China, but failed to do so as the Government of India refused to issue passports for this purpose.³⁴ The annual session of the Congress held in Madras in December 1927 again opposed the despatch of Indian troops to China and advised Indians not to go to China as agents of the British Government.³⁵ The next annual session (Calcutta, 1928) congratulated the Chinese people on the success of their nationalist struggle.³⁶

The increased interest of the Congress in freedom struggles in Asia and Africa was not confined to China. The Madras Congress (1927) also asked for the withdrawal of Indian troops from Mesopotamia and Persia and from all other countries, wherever they might be. Similarly, the Calcutta Congress (1928) warmly assured the peoples of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Palestine of its full sympathy with them in their struggle against Western imperialism. In 1929 the Working Committee showed interest in Afghanistan and wished success to the progressive elements there working under the leadership of King Amanullah.³⁷

This increased interest in the freedom struggles in Asian countries was accompanied by an equally increased interest in close association among them. In his reports on the Brussels Congress Nehru mentioned that the representatives from Asian countries had shown a strong desire for fostering such association, though they failed to devise a practical formula for this purpose. In his presidential address to the Madras Congress (1927) M.A. Ansari spoke eloquently on the need for an Asian federation and described it as the only effective means of checking the forces of Western imperialism and capitalism.³⁸ The next Congress (Calcutta, 1928) directed the Working Committee to take necessary steps to hold in India in 1930 the first session of a 'Pan-Asiatic Federation'.³⁹ By that time the Congress was engaged in a campaign of civil disobedience and could hardly devote any time to that work. However, the adoption of such a resolution is important as showing the intensity of feeling within the Congress on the need for Asian nations to come together.

Along with the growth of this pan-Asian consciousness, the post-Brussels years also witnessed the growth of a feeling of solidarity with anti-imperialist movements all over the world. Such a feeling was, of course, not entirely a post-Brussels phenomenon. As early as 1922, C.R. Das, in his presidential address, had advised the Indian people to keep in touch with world movements and with the lovers of freedom in different parts of the world.⁴⁰ It was only after the Brussels Congress, however, that this became a recurrent theme in the pronouncements of Congress leaders. In his reports on the Brussels Congress Nehru described it as the outward symbol of the keen desire for mutual co-operation being felt by the oppressed and the exploited all over the world. He also warned that, in her own interest as well as in that of the world as a whole, India could not afford to keep herself in isolation from the great movements and forces which were shaping the future. At his instance, the Congress in 1927 decided to affiliate itself with the League against Imperialism, an international organization set up by the Brussels Congress, as an associate member. The next session of the Congress (1928) adopted a resolution declaring that the Indian struggle was part of the general world struggle against imperialism and desiring that India

should develop contacts with other countries who also were combating imperialism.⁴¹

The development of this anti-imperialist world outlook went hand in hand with the development of a warm feeling of friendship for the Soviet Union. This came about largely as a result of the experiences and reactions of Jawaharlal Nehru. During his sojourn in Europe in 1926-7 he not only became sympathetic to the Third International because of its strong anti-imperialist attitude, but was also attracted by the tremendous changes then taking place in the Soviet Union. This attraction became particularly strong after his visit to Moscow in November 1927 as the guest of the Soviet Government. After his return to India, he wrote a number of articles for the Indian press on aspects of life in the Soviet Union and later put them together in the form of a book. I must confess,' he wrote there, 'that the impressions I carried back with me from Moscow were very favourable and all my reading has confirmed those impressions, although there is much that I do not understand and much that I do not like or admire.'⁴² He emphasized that in their own interest Indians must understand the changes taking place in the Soviet Union. For one thing, the problems faced by India and the Soviet Union were similar in many ways. Both were largely agricultural countries with only slight industrialization and both suffered from poverty and illiteracy. If the Soviet Union succeeded in finding a satisfactory solution for its problems, the task in India could become easier. For another, the Soviet Union was India's neighbour, and a powerful neighbour, which might be friendly to India and co-operate with her or be a thorn in her side. In either case, it was essential for the Indian people to know it well so that they might be able to shape their policy correctly.⁴³ So far as Nehru himself was concerned, however, he made it clear that he did not envisage any danger to India from the Soviet Union. Much of the talk of Soviet designs upon India, he wrote, was nothing, but British propaganda and Indians must remain wary of it. India was too similar economically to the Soviet Union to be of any use to it. The latter wanted to build up its industries and for that purpose needed capital and expert knowledge, neither of which could be provided by India. He further added:

Ordinarily India and Russia should live as the best of neighbours with the fewest points of friction. The continuous friction that we see today is between England and Russia, not between India and Russia. Is there any reason why we in India should inherit the age-long rivalry of England against Russia? That is based on the greed and covetousness of British imperialism, and our interests surely lie in ending this imperialism and not in supporting or strengthening it.⁴⁴

The same Brussels Congress which contributed so much to the growth

of fascination for the Soviet Union also, for the first time, implanted in Nehru's mind apprehension regarding the rise of US imperialism and its likely alliance with British imperialism for the creation of an Anglo-Saxon block to dominate the world. This apprehension came to him through his contacts with the Latin American delegates to the Brussels Congress, who told him about the imperialistic role of the United States in South and Central America. Using identical language in both his reports on the Brussels Congress, he observed:

Most of us, especially from Asia were wholly ignorant of the problems of South America, and of how the rising imperialism of the United States, with its tremendous resources and its immunity from outside attack, is gradually taking a stranglehold of Central and South America. But we are not likely to remain ignorant much longer; for the great problem of the near future will be American imperialism, even more than British imperialism, which appears to have had its day and is crumbling fast. Or, it may be, and all indications point to it, that the two will unite together in an endeavour to create a powerful Anglo-Saxon block to dominate the world.⁴⁵

During the years following, with the struggle for Indian freedom gaining further momentum, the general anti-imperialist attitude of the Congress leadership became much stronger and the fascination for the Soviet Union grew correspondingly greater. This was particularly true of Nehru who now became primarily responsible for shaping the Congress outlook on world affairs. He, of course, never became a convert to communism. 'As these pages will show,' he wrote in the last chapter of his autobiography, 'I am very far from being a communist. My roots are still perhaps in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely. . . . I dislike dogmatism, and the treatment of Karl Marx's writings or any other books as revealed scripture which cannot be challenged, and the regimentation and heresy hunts which seem to be a feature of modern communism.'⁴⁶ Yet, as he surveyed the world situation and the struggle going on all over the world from his prison-cell in 1932-3, his sympathies went increasingly to the communist side and he also felt more and more inclined towards a communist philosophy. There was much in the Soviet Union which he disliked, particularly suppression of all contrary opinion, regimentation and violence, but the capitalist world appeared equally full of violence. There was, however, one major difference. While the violence of the capitalist world seemed inherent in it, that in the Soviet Union aimed at a new order based on peace and co-operation and real freedom for the masses. Besides, the Soviet Union was clearly forging ahead while the capitalist world lay in the grip of depression since the crash of 1929 and was going backward in some ways. Nehru was particularly impressed by the reports of progress

in Soviet Central Asia. In the balance, therefore, he was all for the Soviet Union and its presence and example appeared to him as 'a bright and heartening phenomenon in a dark and dismal world'.⁴⁷

Even if the Soviet Union blundered or failed, that would not, in Nehru's eyes, affect the soundness of the Marxist theory. It lightened up many a dark corner of his mind and gave a new meaning to history which became 'an unfolding drama with some order and purpose, howsoever unconscious, behind it'. Although he found a lot of dogma around official communism, it was the essential freedom from dogma and the scientific outlook of Marxism that appealed to him. Above all, the great world economic crisis following the depression seemed to justify the theory of Marxism. 'While all other systems and theories were groping in the dark, Marxism alone explained it more or less satisfactorily and offered a real solution'.⁴⁸ Marxism filled Nehru's mind with a new excitement and he saw a certain pattern behind the apparently chaotic and unconnected events then taking place in the various parts of the world. 'India with her problems and struggles became just a part of this mighty world drama, of the great struggle of political and economic forces that was going on everywhere, nationally and internationally.'⁴⁹

Nehru utilized his brief respite from prison in 1933 to share his thoughts with his countrymen through a series of articles on the national and international situation which were subsequently published in the form of a pamphlet entitled *Whither India?* According to him, the troubles of the world were largely the result of the inherent conflicts of a decaying capitalism, symbolized by the great depression gripping the capitalist world since 1929. This was the crisis of capitalism, caused essentially by the ill-distribution of the world's wealth and its concentration in a few hands. As the capitalist order decayed, it had to face increasing challenges from labour. With the increase in the strength of the latter, the possessing classes joined together to fight the common enemy. This led to the rise of fascism as well as the 'so-called national governments', but as neither offered any solution to the problem of inequitable distribution of wealth, they were bound to fail. Not only did capitalism lead to fascism, but also to imperialism. This in turn led to conflicts over the distribution of colonies, raw materials and markets, as also to conflicts between the imperialist powers on the one hand and the nationalist and working-class movements of colonial countries on the other. Asia provided the main field of conflict at that time between nationalism and imperialism. And in that conflict India occupied a major place. The Indian problem thus, emphasized Nehru, was a part of the general Asian problem and was tied up with the problems of the world. 'We cannot, even if we will it, separate it from the rest. What happens in India will affect the world and world events will change India's future.'⁵⁰

3. Opposition to Fascism as well as to Imperialism (1935-39)

The world-outlook of Nehru, sketched above, became the foundation of the general Congress outlook on world affairs when he became president of the Congress for the second time in April 1936 (he had been first elected to that office in 1929) and gave it a certain new direction, though still working under the overall leadership of Gandhi. In his presidential address, Nehru recapitulated his analysis of the world situation first given in *Whither India?*, reminded his listeners that the Indian struggle was only 'part of a far wider struggle for freedom', and gave a stirring call to them to stand by the side of the progressive forces in that struggle:

Thus we see that the world is divided into two vast groups today — the imperialist and fascist on one side, the socialist and nationalist on the other. There is some overlapping of the two and the line between them is difficult to draw, for there is mutual conflict between the fascist and imperialist powers, and the nationalism of subject countries has sometimes a tendency to fascism. But the main division holds, and if we keep it in mind, it will be easier for us to understand world conditions and our own place in them. Where do we stand then, we who labour for a free India? Inevitably we take our stand with the progressive forces of the world which are ranged against fascism and imperialism.⁵¹

This line was generally accepted by almost all the Congress leaders. There was, however, one important exception: Subhas Chandra Bose, who succeeded Nehru as president of the Congress in 1938. In his presidential address Bose suggested that, in the field of foreign policy, the Congress should not be influenced by the international politics of any country or the form of its state. It should learn from Soviet diplomacy which did not hesitate to make alliances with non-socialist states and had not declined sympathy or support coming from any quarter.⁵² This was probably a hint that the Congress should tone down its utterances against the fascist powers. The Congress, however, had already, under Nehru's guidance, taken a very strong anti-fascist stand and, with Nehru's continuing influence in its leadership, no dent could be made in that stand. Indeed, the same policy continued even with Bose as president. The latter obviously realized the strength of feeling behind it and not only did not oppose, but publicly associated himself with it as president.⁵³

The Congress policy of opposition to both fascism and imperialism comes out clearly in its reaction to the Italian invasion and conquest of Abyssinia (1936). It was primarily out of his disgust with the Italian policy that Nehru, while in Europe, had declined a pressing invitation from Mussolini to see him in March 1936. In his presidential address to

the Lucknow Congress (April 1936) he referred to the war in Abyssinia as an example of how hungry and predatory imperialism behaved in its mad search for colonial domains. The Congress adopted a resolution expressing India's sympathy with the Abyssinian people and describing their struggle as part of the struggle of all exploited nations for freedom.⁵⁴ At the call of the Congress, 9 May 1936 was observed as Abyssinia Day all over India in order to express sympathy with that country.

The Congress also extended its sympathy and support to the Arabs in Palestine. There was, of course, no lack of sympathy for the Jews because of their persecution in Europe, particularly at the hands of Hitler, but the Congress had no doubt that Palestine was an Arab country and that it was wrong for the Zionists to establish their sway there with the help of the British armed might. As Nehru explained it, in the course of an article published in June 1936, fundamentally the problem of Palestine was a nationalist problem involving the struggle of the Arabs against imperialist control and domination.⁵⁵ Shortly after the publication of this article, the Working Committee sent its greetings to the Arabs of Palestine and expressed its sympathy with them in their struggle for freedom.⁵⁶ At the instance of the Congress, 27 September 1936 was observed as Palestine Day and meetings and demonstrations were organized all over the country in support of the Arabs. In 1937, the All India Congress Committee protested against the reign of terror in Palestine and supported the Arabs in their opposition to the proposed partition of their country.⁵⁷ In February 1938, the annual session of the Congress adopted a resolution condemning the plan for partition and making a plea for an amicable settlement between the Arabs and Jews.⁵⁸ At its next annual session (1939) the Congress again adopted a resolution on Palestine expressing its sympathy with the Arabs and looking forward to the emergence of an independent democratic state in Palestine with adequate provision for the protection of Jewish rights.⁵⁹

The Congress showed similar interest in the struggle of the republican forces in Spain against the fascist onslaught of General Franco. 'In Spain today,' observed Nehru, in course of his presidential address to the Faizpur session of the Congress held in December 1936, 'our battles are being fought and we watch this struggle not merely with the sympathy of friendly outsiders, but with the painful anxiety of those who are themselves involved in it.'⁶⁰ Following Nehru's lead the Congress adopted a resolution conveying its greetings to the Spanish people and affirming that the Spanish Civil War was a struggle between democratic progress and fascist reaction and consequently of great significance for the future of India and the world.⁶¹ In February 1937, Nehru appealed to the Indian people not to remain content with extending moral support

to the republican forces in Spain, but also send them medical supplies and food, or money with which to buy them.⁶² In June 1938, he visited the battle-front in Spain as the guest of the Republican Government and met important Republican leaders in order to personally convey India's support to them.⁶³

Congress even more actively supported China when it was subjected to invasion by Japan in 1937. In October of that year the All India Congress Committee adopted a resolution noting with grave concern and horror the imperialist aggression of Japan, applauding the heroic struggle of the Chinese people and assuring them of India's solidarity. It also called upon the Indian people to boycott Japanese goods.⁶⁴ Such a resolution was again adopted by the annual session of the Congress held in February 1938.⁶⁵ At the instance of the Congress 12 June 1938 was observed throughout India as China Day. This was followed by the despatch of an Indian Medical Mission to China under the leadership of Dr M. Atal. The next annual Congress session held in March 1939 again sent its greetings to the Chinese people and congratulated them on their heroic resistance.⁶⁶ Five months later, Nehru himself paid a visit to China and personally conveyed India's greetings and good wishes to the Chinese leaders. War was expected to break out any moment in Europe and many advised Nehru against undertaking a trip in such a situation, but the latter was so moved by the call of India-China friendship that he disregarded this advice and went ahead with his plan. As he explained, 'I chose to go because, while I hesitated, loving and comradely hands beckoned to me from China and distant memories of ages past urged me to go. . . . The present will pass and merge into the future, and India will remain and China will remain, and the two will work together for their own good and the good of the world.'⁶⁷

The Congress reacted equally strongly against Hitler's designs upon Czechoslovakia in 1938 and thoroughly disapproved of the Anglo-French policy of appeasement of Hitler which culminated in the signing of the Munich Agreement, largely conceding the latter's demands. A few weeks before this Nehru, then in Europe, was pressingly invited by the Nazi Government to visit Germany, but he declined to do so. Instead, he went to Czechoslovakia and conveyed India's sympathy to its leaders. On 8 September 1938, he wrote to the *Manchester Guardian*: 'Recent developments in Czechoslovakia and the way the British Government, directly and through its mediators, has bullied and threatened the Czechoslovak Government at every turn has produced a feeling of nausea in me, and I have wondered how any Englishman with any trace of liberal instincts or decency could tolerate this.'⁶⁸ The Working Committee broadly agreed with Nehru's viewpoint and adopted a resolution showing great concern at the German onslaught on the freedom of Czechoslovakia and expressing its sympathy with the

people of that country.⁶⁹ 'Let the Czechs know,' wrote Gandhi, 'that the Working Committee wrung itself with pain while their doom was being decided.'⁷⁰

This opposition to both fascism and imperialism coloured the Congress attitude towards the imminence of another world war because of the rapidly deteriorating international situation. On that issue the Congress, as pointed out by Nehru, followed a dual policy. On the one hand, it strongly disliked the aggressive policies of the leading fascist powers — Germany, Italy and Japan — and showed its readiness to join hands with other peoples for the preservation of peace and freedom. On the other hand, it again and again declared that imperialism itself was one of the greatest causes of war and it must disappear if peace was to be preserved and fascism defeated. This underlined the urgency of the recognition of India's independence.⁷¹ Thus, when Romain Rolland, Honorary President of the World Committee for the Struggle against War and Fascism, invited the Congress to participate in the World Congress for Peace to be held at Brussels in September 1936, its Lucknow session (1936) readily accepted that invitation and assured him of its full co-operation in the great work of ensuring peace in the world. While doing so, however, it also expressed its conviction that lasting peace could only be established when the underlying causes of war were removed and the domination and exploitation of one nation by another ended.⁷² The Congress adopted a similar attitude towards the problem of collective security. 'Those who talk about collective security,' wrote Nehru in May 1938, 'will have to be clear in their minds about it. Is it going to be based on pacts of certain Western Governments and on the continuation of the imperialist system? To imagine so is to ignore realities. There can be no collective security or peace on the basis of imperialism, just as there can be no peace if fascism holds sway.'⁷³

This really formed the background to the main issue which the Congress had to face, namely, what attitude to adopt if Britain became involved in war and, as in the past, sought to drag India also into it. Thanks to Nehru's deep understanding of the developing international situation and his strong determination not to let India's resources be exploited for British imperialist purposes, the Congress had adopted a resolution on the war issue as early as 1927 at its Madras session. It had then declared that the Indian people must have the right to decide whether to participate in any war or not. If the British Government embarked on any warlike adventure and made an attempt to involve India in it, it would be the duty of the Indian people to refuse to take part in such a war.⁷⁴ The Congress reiterated this stand at its next annual session (Calcutta, 1928) and declared that the Indian people would not allow themselves to be exploited by Britain to further her imperialist

aims.⁷⁵ Between 1936 and 1939, the Congress based itself on this earlier stand.

Thus the Lucknow Congress (April 1936) recalled the stand of its Madras session (1927), which had for the first time opposed India's involvement in any war without the consent of her people, and reiterated its old resolve to resist the exploitation of Indian resources for British imperialist purposes. The Faizpur Congress (December 1936) again declared that in the event of war there was grave danger of Indian resources being utilized for British imperialist purposes and called upon the Indian people to prepare themselves to resist this. At its next annual session (Haripura, 1938) the Congress, in view of the fast deteriorating international situation, thought it fit to explain at some length its policy towards world affairs and India's involvement in war. It declared that the Indian people wished to live in peace and friendship with their neighbours and with all other countries. Further, they wished to work for the foundation of a new world order based on international co-operation and goodwill. This could not, however, materialise so long as the causes of conflict among nations, chief among which was the domination of one nation over another, continued to exist. Not only had these causes continued to exist, but the past few years had also witnessed a further deterioration in the international situation, an increase in fascist aggression and an unabashed defiance of international obligations by the fascist powers. The Congress held Britain primarily responsible for that deterioration as she had steadily supported fascist Germany, Spain and Japan. The British Government even at that time sought agreement with Nazi Germany and had developed close relations with Franco's Spain. This policy was encouraging the drift to an imperialist world war. India could be no party to such a war and would not allow the use of her men and money in the interest of British imperialism. Nor could India join any war without the express consent of her people.⁷⁶

The war issue became particularly live at the time of the Munich crisis. As war between Britain and Germany appeared imminent, the Congress had to seriously consider what to do if it really broke out. The differences between Gandhi and Nehru on this issue came into the open for the first time and presaged their more publicized differences after the outbreak of the Second World War. Nehru was in Europe when the Working Committee met in Delhi in the last week of September 1938 to consider the Czechoslovak crisis. As the crisis passed without the outbreak of a war, the committee contented itself with adopting a resolution of sympathy with Czechoslovakia and did not say anything on the war issue. Gandhi, however, soon revealed how his own mind had been working on it. According to him, the real issue boiled down to whether,

if Britain went to war with Germany on the issue of the latter's demands on Czechoslovakia, India was to bargain with Britain for her freedom and appear to befriend Czechoslovakia or take a stand on the basis of its faith in non-violence. In the latter case, the Congress could only declare, in that hour of trial for afflicted humanity, that, consistent with her creed, India could not associate herself with war even though it might ostensibly be for the defence of Czechoslovakia whose very existence was threatened for no fault of hers, or for the only fault that she was too small to defend herself single-handed. The Working Committee, wrote Gandhi, had almost come to the conclusion that it would deny itself the opportunity to bargain with Britain for India's freedom by offering to support the war effort and declare that the way to peace with honour did not lie through war, but only and truly through the practice of organized non-violence even unto death. Yet even with Nehru absent there was no unanimity in the Working Committee on this issue and Gandhi observed that he could not state with certainty that it would have really followed that course, though, of course, he himself had no doubt that it was the only natural and logical step for it to take.⁷⁷

By contrast, Nehru took the very line which Gandhi regarded as inconsistent with the creed of non-violence. Ten days before Gandhi stated his case, Nehru made it clear, through a public statement, that an India with her freedom assured to her and working for the establishment of a democratic state would be a pillar of strength to freedom and democracy elsewhere, and would throw in all her weight and resources, in war or in peace, for the defence of democracy. She would most willingly join forces in defence of Czechoslovakia, to combat fascism and to work for a settlement doing away with the injustices of the past and the present and laying the foundation of a true world order.⁷⁸ This does not mean that Nehru was not fascinated by non-violence. Only a few months before the Munich settlement he had written that in a world full of war and preparations for war India stood significantly as a country which had deliberately based its policy on peace and non-violence. Though he could not say how far it was possible to apply those methods in the international sphere at that time, he was convinced that the non-violence of the Indian struggle was not a weak, passive and ineffective pacifism. It was a dynamic thing with sanctions behind it, and if the world was to progress in culture and civilization, it would have to adopt peaceful methods for solving its problems. That day might yet be distant. But India would endeavour with all her heart to bring it nearer.⁷⁹ In the then existing situation, however, Nehru thought that, instead of basing its stand on non-violence, as Gandhi desired, the Congress should show its willingness to support the war effort, if India's own freedom was assured. In this he reflected the attitude of the majority of the Congress leaders,

who thought that the issue of India's participation in any future war should be settled purely on political considerations and not on that of its faith in non-violence. This continued to guide the Congress policy.

At its annual session at Tripuri (March 1939) the Congress put on record its entire disapproval of British foreign policy which, in its view, had been marked by deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, ending of the system of collective security, and co-operation with governments which were enemies of democracy and freedom. It further declared that the Congress was opposed to fascism and imperialism alike and was convinced that world peace and progress required the ending of both. In its opinion, it was urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping away from both imperialism and fascism and pursuing the path of peace and freedom.⁸⁰

When, with the stiffening of British policy after the German attack on Czechoslovakia in March 1939, it became clear that Britain and Germany were moving inevitably towards war, the Congress stuck to its basic stand. 'For us in India', wrote Nehru on 18 April 1939, 'our path is clear. It is one of complete opposition to fascists; it is also one of opposition to imperialism. We are not going to throw in our resources in defence of empire. But we would gladly offer those very resources for the defence of democracy, the democracy of free India lined up with other free countries.'⁸¹ On 1 May 1939, the All India Congress Committee reaffirmed its determination to oppose all attempts to involve India in a war without the consent of the Indian people.⁸² This was reiterated by the Working Committee in the second week of August 1939, although at the same time it also made it clear that in the world crisis its sympathies were entirely with the people who stood for democracy and freedom. As a mark of protest against the recent despatch of Indian troops to Egypt and Singapore, it called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session of that body. It also advised the Congress Ministries in the provinces not to assist in any way the war preparations of the British Government and to remain prepared to give up office if Congress policy led to that contingency.⁸³

4. Issues Relating to War and Peace (1939-1945)

The outbreak of the Second World War in the first week of September 1939 proved to be a turning point in the evolution of the Congress outlook on foreign policy. As noted above, the Congress had formulated its views on the war issue since as early as 1927 and continuously paid attention to it between 1936 and 1939, but it had been largely a hypothetical issue. Now the war, which had been talked about for so long,

had actually begun and was going to shape the future of the world and of India in a most intimate way. The Congress had to apply its policy in this changed context, keeping in view its opposition to both fascism and imperialism and to India's involvement in the war without the express consent of her people. In so doing, it developed a sophisticated world view, reconciling the apparently contradictory pulls of nationalism and internationalism, and charted out an independent path in world affairs, based on championship of the causes of freedom and peace. The war years also witnessed the further strengthening of the feeling of solidarity with other Asian countries and of friendship for the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Congress, for the first time, grappled seriously with the problem of national defence in the context of its fascination for non-violence on the one hand and the realities of the world situation on the other.

The first authoritative statement of the Congress on India's role in the Second World War emerged from its Working Committee after long deliberation on 14 September 1939. Drafted by Nehru, it was firmly based on the oft-repeated stand of the Congress on the war issue between 1936 and 1939. It took the gravest view of the action of the viceroy in declaring India a belligerent country on the side of Britain without first obtaining the consent of the Indian people. Recalling the earlier Congress disapproval of Fascism and Nazism, it unhesitatingly condemned the latest aggression of Germany against Poland and expressed its sympathy with all those who resisted it. At the same time it recalled the basic Congress stand that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and that no outside authority could impose that decision upon them. Nor could the Indian people permit their resources to be used for imperialist ends.

The Working Committee admitted its awareness of the fact that Britain as well as France had declared that they were fighting to end aggression and safeguard freedom and democracy, but pointed out that the history of the recent past, from the First World War to the outbreak of the Second, had been full of examples showing the constant divergence between the ideals proclaimed and real motives and objectives. It was not, therefore, prepared to take any chances on this occasion and considered it proper to insist on a clarification of the issues at the very beginning. The statement went on to declare:

If the war is to defend the *status quo*, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privilege, then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. . . . If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India and

the Indian people must have the right of self-determination. . . . A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation.⁸⁴

The implication of this statement was that the Congress was prepared to support the war effort but only on condition that India's independence was recognized immediately. If this condition was not met, it would oppose the use of Indian resources in men or money for prosecuting the war. Upon the British failing to come forward with a satisfactory declaration of their war aims, the Congress asked its ministries in all the eight provinces where they were functioning to resign, but otherwise stayed its hand in order not to do anything which might jeopardize the war effort against the fascist powers. Only when repeated talks with the viceroy for a settlement failed, did it, at its annual session at Ramgarh in March 1940, decide in favour of starting civil disobedience by way of protest against the use of Indian resources in the war without the consent of the Indian people. Even after the adoption of this resolution, the Congress leaders sought to avoid resort to civil disobedience, if at all possible. Gandhi, who had been made primarily responsible for starting civil disobedience, openly declared that he had no desire whatsoever to embarrass the British, especially at a time when it was a question of life and death with them. When, after the failure of another effort at a settlement with the government, the Congress finally decided to resort to civil disobedience in September 1940, it took care to restrict it to selected individuals so as not to create too much difficulty for the government in view of the worsening war situation.

In the meanwhile, the Congress had passed through a minor crisis which helped it to clarify its thinking on the issue of non-violence and national defence. The sweeping victories of Hitler, symbolized by the fall of France in June 1940, and the mounting destruction as the war proceeded in all its fury, convinced Gandhi more than ever before that the world must adopt non-violence if it was to save itself from complete destruction. He even commended the action of those French leaders who had sued for peace with Hitler and wrote that they had shown rare courage in bowing to the inevitable and refusing to be party to senseless mutual slaughter.⁸⁵ He followed this up with an appeal to the British people to adopt non-violence and stop the war. He appealed for the cessation of hostilities, he wrote, not because the British were too exhausted to fight, but because war was bad in essence. No cause, however just, could warrant the indiscriminate slaughter that was going on minute by minute.⁸⁶ Gandhi did not hold these views only for the benefit of other countries, but also wanted them to be adopted by India. He, therefore, presented them before the Working Committee in the

middle of June for its consideration. The Committee agreed with Gandhi that the war had shown the inefficiency of organized violence, on however vast a scale, for the defence of national freedom, but could not persuade itself to go the full length with him and declare that free India would do without armed forces. It, on the other hand, recognized that Gandhi should be free to pursue his ideal in his own way and, therefore, freed him from all responsibility for the programme of the Congress with regard to the threat of invasion and internal disorder.⁸⁷

This, however, did not mean that the Congress had given up its attachment to non-violence. On the contrary, while not prepared to rely solely on non-violence for national defence, it not only remained firm in its adherence to non-violence for achieving India's independence, but was also interested in its application in free India's external relations, to the extent possible. This was made clear by a resolution adopted by the All India Congress Committee in September 1940 when renewed efforts for a settlement with the British Government came to nothing and the Congress saw no alternative to a campaign of civil disobedience and hence also to Gandhi's leadership. The resolution further added that the Congress was convinced, and recent world events had demonstrated, that complete world disarmament as well as the establishment of a new and just political and economic order were necessary, if the world was not to destroy itself and revert to barbarism. A free India, therefore, would throw all her weight in favour of world disarmament and should herself be prepared to give a lead in this to the world. Such lead would inevitably depend on external factors and internal conditions, but the state would do its utmost to give effect to this policy of disarmament. The establishment of effective disarmament and world peace depended ultimately on the removal of the causes of wars. These causes must be rooted out by ending the domination and exploitation of one country by another. India would peacefully labour to bring this about and it was with this objective in view that the people of India desired to attain the status of an independent nation.⁸⁸

This apparently satisfied Gandhi, who resumed the leadership of the Congress and launched a campaign of civil disobedience on its behalf in October 1940. The Congress still remained wary of doing anything which might seriously affect the strength of the anti-fascist struggle on the world plane. The civil disobedience campaign, therefore, was planned as a moral protest, to be offered by selected individuals, and not as a mass struggle. While the campaign was continuing, there came a significant change in the war situation with Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the swift advance of the German forces inside that country. On 4 December 1941, the government began releasing the Congressmen arrested during the individual civil

disobedience campaign with a view to giving them an opportunity to assess the war situation afresh and, if possible, adopt a policy of co-operation with the government. Three days later came the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, bringing the United States into the war as a combatant. It was against this background that the Working Committee met in the last week of December 1941 to take stock of the situation and decide the future Congress policy.

It would be useful at this stage to briefly review Nehru's recent thinking on China, the Soviet Union and the United States. For this naturally conditioned his approach to the new developments in the war situation and influenced Congress policy. As far as China was concerned Nehru continued to nourish a strong feeling of solidarity with her. In an article published in April 1940 he emphasized the crucial importance of the conflict in East Asia and remarked that what happened in China and India would affect the entire humanity. This was so not merely because of the vast numbers of people living in these countries or their tremendously rich past heritage, but also because of their enormous resources and their potential economic as well as political strength. 'There is much talk of a new order and world co-operation. There can be no stable order or effective co-operation in the world if China and India are ignored, and relatively weak though they might be today, they are not so weak as to submit to any such treatment.'⁸⁹ Nehru must have been immensely pleased to notice that such sentiments were also shared by the Chinese leaders. Particularly gratifying was the letter of Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh received in July 1940. Praising the work of the Indian Medical Mission, sent by the Congress in 1938 and attached to the Eighth Route Army commanded by them, they observed:

The great Indian people and the Chinese have a common destiny. We, the Indian people and the Chinese combined, compose almost half of mankind. We are two peoples who have been suffering longest imperial oppression and slavery, and we both have the glorious tradition of fighting for liberty and freedom. Our emancipation, the emancipation of the Indian people and the Chinese, will be the signal of the emancipation of all the downtrodden and oppressed.⁹⁰

Nehru's friendly feelings for the Soviet Union also continued through the war years, though he no longer supported or admired all its moves in the field of foreign policy. In 1939, when on the eve of the outbreak of the world war, news came of the signing of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact, Nehru was a little dismayed and saw an element of cynicism and opportunism in the action. He, however, avoided any direct criticism of the Soviet Union and tried to put it in historical perspective against the background of British policy towards it in the

past. 'There can be,' he wrote, 'and there is going to be, no real alliance between Hitler and Stalin. But both are willing enough to play the game of power politics. Russia has suffered insult enough at the hands of England to resent it bitterly.'⁹¹

When, shortly after the signing of the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact, Soviet forces marched into Eastern Poland, Nehru received another shock. He could not say whether this was to counter the German army, or to weaken the Poles, or merely to take advantage of a particular situation from the nationalist point of view. However, he was convinced that this would work against Germany's interests and ultimately help the Western Allies. As he saw it, the Soviet action had prevented German occupation of Eastern Poland and acquisition of Rumania's oilfields and wheat supplies. It had also saved the Balkans from German aggression and relieved Turkey.⁹²

When the Soviet Union followed up the occupation of Eastern Poland by the invasion of Finland, Nehru was pained to see it playing the game of power politics and deviating from the principles which he thought it had been following earlier, but he did not sympathize with the Western condemnation of that action. On 3 December 1939, he wrote that the Soviet Union was only paying the Western powers in their own coin. Besides, the case of Finland could not be considered in isolation from the general world situation. Britain and France had in the past followed a fundamentally anti-Soviet policy and might still line up with Italy and Germany in opposition to the Soviet Union. It had been well known that German strategists had made plans for the invasion of the Soviet Union through Finland. A look at the map would show how feasible that plan was, as Leningrad lay within an easy march across Finland's borders. It should not, therefore, be difficult for anyone to understand the keenness of the Soviet Union to protect one of its vital centres. Then there was also the question of the defence of the entire Soviet experiment. It would be a tragedy if its enemies ever succeeded in bringing it to an end. 'That experiment,' wrote Nehru, 'has many undesirable features which we have deeply regretted, but it is still the hope of the common man in his hundreds of millions.'⁹³

As the people of Finland continued to resist the Soviet forces and news of their spirited resistance poured in, Nehru's perception underwent a change and he realized that the Soviet Union was pitted against the genuine forces of nationalism there. This came out clearly through his next article on the war situation which was published on 16 January 1940. In a tone full of sadness and disillusion, he wrote:

The future is uncertain and full of gloom, and the bright idealism, which persisted even through the conflicts and betrayals of the thirties, seems to fade away. War and violence, aggression and duplicity, and unadulterated

opportunism overshadow the world, and the shape of things to come grows more and more amorphous and shapeless. None pays heed to or believes in the fine phrases of politicians or gives credence to their promises. The new order that was to find realisation, where is it now? From whose womb will it find birth? Will this growing chaos give birth to the bright star of freedom and world cooperation?

The Soviet action in Finland was clearly the chief cause of Nehru's sadness. The symbol of hope and fulfilment for the progressive forces all over the world, he wrote, had descended from the high pedestal on which her ardent champions had placed her and bartered away her moral prestige for seeming political advantage. He no longer made any effort to defend the Soviet action and unequivocally sympathized with Finland. 'A small democratic country,' he declared, 'is fighting gallantly for its freedom and against aggression and it is inevitable that sympathy should go to it.'

Nehru's criticism of the Soviet action in Finland, however, did not mark the end of his admiration for the Soviet Union. He took care to distinguish his stand from that of 'the forces of reaction everywhere', to whom, according to him, the war in Finland had come as a special dispensation from heaven, providing them with a congenial atmosphere for ventilating their old hatred of socialism and of the Soviet Union as a socialist state. Indians, he emphasized, had to beware of the spate of propaganda that comes to them from tainted and partial sources against the Soviet Union and to keep on guard against the atrocity campaigns worked up in foreign countries or in India against that country. They had to hold on to their belief in socialism and the socialist order as a solvent of the world's ills. They had also to remember that the Soviet Union, in spite of its many failings, had gone a long way towards establishing the socialist economic system, 'and it would be a tragedy if this mighty scheme of things, so full of promise for the future, was ended or crippled. We can be no parties to this.'⁹⁴

Around this time Nehru spoke quite enthusiastically of the United States. He seems to have been very much impressed by the dynamic leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in pulling the weight of his powerful country on the side of the democratic forces in the world struggle. He was also drawn by the hope that Roosevelt's dedication to the cause of democracy on the world stage might facilitate India's independence at a time when Britain's dependence upon the United States was so apparent. In an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in April 1940, Nehru wrote that it was right and proper that the people of the United States of America should try to understand India's problems in relation to the world, for on them ultimately would fall the burden of the future, whether they wished it or not. That burden had been cast on

them because of their great material resources and dominating position in the world, but even more so had this happened because of their leadership of the forces of democracy in the world. If the American people were really going to strengthen these forces, they would have to throw their weight on the side of liberty and democracy not only in Europe and America, but also in other parts of the world, including India. 'India is far from America', observed Nehru, 'but more and more our thoughts go to this great democratic country, which seems, almost alone, to keep the torch of democratic freedom alight in the world given over to imperialism and fascism, violence and aggression, and opportunism of the worst type.'⁹⁵

Holding such views, it was quite natural for Nehru to laud the struggles of the Russian and Chinese peoples shortly after his release from prison in the first week of December 1941⁹⁶ and to declare a few days later that there was no doubt in his mind that the progressive forces of the world were aligned with the group represented by the Soviet Union, China, the United States and Britain.⁹⁷ Acting largely on his advice, the Working Committee at its meeting at Bardoli in the last week of December 1941, took note of the new factors in the international situation and again thought it fit, albeit in an indirect way, to seek a settlement with Britain. While there had been no change in Britain's policy towards India, the Working Committee declared, it must nevertheless take into full consideration the new world situation that had arisen because of the development of the war into a world conflict and its approach to India's borders. The sympathies of the Congress, it further added, must inevitably lie with the peoples who were the victims of aggression and who were fighting for their freedom, but only an independent India could be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in furtherance of the larger causes that were emerging from the storm of the war.⁹⁸

At Bardoli the Working Committee also adopted a resolution expressing its sympathy specifically with the Soviet Union and China. The Soviet Union, it declared, had stood for certain human, social and cultural values which were of great importance to the progress of humanity, and it would be a tragedy if the cataclysm of war involved the destruction of that endeavour and achievement. Further, it affirmed its admiration for the astonishing self-sacrifice and heroic courage of the Soviet people in the defence of their country and freedom and conveyed its warm sympathy to them. It also conveyed its greetings to the Chinese people and referred to the fact that through four and a half years of devastating war and suffering they had never wavered and thus set an example of unparalleled heroism.⁹⁹

The visit to India by Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek in

February 1942, further strengthened the bond between India and China. They came as the guests of the Government of India, but had long and cordial talks with both Gandhi and Nehru, particularly with the latter, and openly pleaded for the recognition of Indian independence. 'The bond that tied India and China,' recalled Nehru later, 'grew stronger, and so did the desire to line up with China and other nations against the common adversary.'¹⁰⁰

It was this urge to line up with the progressive forces in the world in their struggle against fascism which led the Congress to overlook for the time being such negative features in the Cripps Plan (March 1942) as the denial of democratic rights to the people living in the Indian States and the acceptance of the principle of non-accession of a province to the proposed Indian Union, and show its readiness to co-operate with the war effort if Indian independence was recognized, and effective power was transferred to Indian hands. It was the failure of the British to satisfy the Congress on the latter point which alone was responsible for the breakdown of its negotiations with Cripps.

Although this breakdown caused considerable bitterness and resentment in Congress ranks, the commitment of the Congress to the struggle against fascism never slackened. This was largely the result of Nehru's determination to see to it that the ideological link between the Indian struggle for freedom and the anti-fascist struggle at the international level was not snapped. When, after the failure of the Cripps Mission, Gandhi came to the conclusion that the time had come to demand immediate British withdrawal from India and to invoke the sanction of a mass struggle in support of such a demand, his main problem was to convince Nehru of the soundness of this move. The latter felt that a mass struggle at that time would interfere with the war effort of the United Nations and increase the peril of a Japanese advance upon India. Nehru fell in line only when he found that his arguments had failed to dissuade Gandhi from his determined course and events were in any case moving towards a conflict.¹⁰¹ Gandhi also accommodated Nehru to the extent possible under the circumstances. He stuck to his demand for the immediate British withdrawal from India, but more and more he linked it with the victory of the United Nations. The end-product of the Gandhi-Nehru dialogue in the summer of 1942 was embodied in the famous Quit India Resolution moved by the latter on 7 August before the All India Congress Committee and adopted by that body the next day. It was very much the handiwork of Nehru and reflected his effort to reconcile the somewhat conflicting claims of nationalism and internationalism.

The resolution declared that the immediate termination of British rule over India was an urgent necessity, both for the sake of India and for the

success of the United Nations. India, the classic victim of modern imperialism, had become the crux of the question of the justice and morality of the Allied objectives in the war. Her freedom had become a test by which the subject peoples of Asia and Africa would judge Britain as well as the other countries of the United Nations. A free India would not only materially affect the fortunes of the war by throwing all her resources into the struggle against fascism and imperialism, but also give the United Nations the moral and spiritual leadership of the world.

Showing its concern at the deteriorating situation on the Soviet and Chinese fronts, the Committee conveyed to the peoples of these countries its appreciation of their heroism in defending their freedom. It reiterated the desire of the Congress not to embarrass in any way the defence of the Soviet Union and China, whose freedom it considered precious, or to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the other United Nations. It renewed its appeal to the latter, at that last moment, in the interest of world freedom, but felt that it was no longer justified in holding the nation back from asserting its will against an imperialist and authoritarian government and, therefore, sanctioned the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale under Gandhi's leadership.

The committee also took the opportunity to declare its aims regarding the settlement of the post-war world. India's independence, it emphasized, must be the symbol of and prelude to the independence of all other Asian countries under foreign domination. Such of them as had fallen under Japanese control must not be placed again under any foreign power after being freed from that control. To safeguard the future peace of the world, there must be organized a world federation of free nations which independent India would gladly join. This federation should be based on the freedom of its constituent nations, the prevention of aggression and exploitation of one nation by another, the protection of national minorities, the advancement of all backward areas and peoples, and the pooling of the world's resources for the common good of all. The establishment of such a federation would make disarmament practicable in all countries, render national armies, navies and air forces unnecessary, and through a world defence force prevent aggression.¹⁰²

It was expected in some circles that such a statement might provide the basis for an honourable settlement between Britain and India and enable India to play her due role in the war on the side of the United Nations, but the British Government had other ideas. The Congress leaders were rounded up on the morning of 9 August 1942 and, with the exception of Gandhi who was released in 1944 on medical grounds, kept in prison till June 1945. Thus the August Resolution remained the main

authoritative statement of Congress policy on issues relating to war and peace till almost the end of the Second World War. The years in prison, however, were not entirely fruitless so far as thinking on matters connected with foreign policy was concerned. This was particularly true of Nehru who had been mainly concerned with such thinking since 1927. As during the early thirties, he devoted a good deal of his time in prison during 1942-5 to study and reflection on the world situation, and on how it was likely to affect India. Out of this emerged his vision of India's role in the post-war world and this was reflected in his reactions to the various developments in the world between 1945 and 1947, foreshadowing in its essentials the foreign policy which India has been pursuing since the achievement of independence. To that we now turn.

5. Non-Alignment and International Co-operation (1945-47)

Nehru's understanding of the nature of the post-war world and his vision of India's role in it are to be found in *The Discovery of India* which he wrote in 1944. He realized then that the outstanding result of the Second World War was going to be the supremacy of the United States and the Soviet Union in international politics. Much in the post-war world, he wrote, would depend upon their policies and on the degree of co-ordination or conflict between them and Britain. Whatever might happen in the future, the US economy after the war was bound to be powerfully expansionist. It would be a tragedy if this led to some new kind of imperialism, for the United States had the power as well as the opportunity to set the pace of the future. He at the same time felt that the Soviet Union was clearly showing an expansionist tendency. The future policy of the Soviet Union, he wrote, was shrouded in mystery, but some revealing glimpses of it had already appeared, namely, an expansion of its territories more or less on the basis of the Tsar's empire, and an effort to have near its borders as many friendly and dependent or semi-dependent countries as possible.

Turning to Britain, Nehru noted that her foreign investments had disappeared and she was burdened with huge debts. The financial supremacy of London belonged to the past. Still Britain seemed to feel that she must maintain her empire with only unavoidable minor changes. This colonial outlook would not fit in with American policy and expansionist tendencies, for the United States would seek open markets for its exports and would oppose all those who tried to limit or control them. In such a situation friction in export trade was inevitable between Britain and the United States. Although this type of rivalry would not affect the relationship between the latter and the Soviet Union, their differences were actually deeper and their respective viewpoints further apart. If these differences continued to grow, the United States and Britain would seek each other's company and support as

against the group of nations headed by the Soviet Union. Thus did Nehru, already in 1944, foresee the emergence of the two rival power blocs on the world stage.¹⁰³ How would the people of Asia and Africa react to this emerging picture? According to Nehru, they were bound to consider each move in the context of their own aspirations for freedom and equality and rapid economic development. As he put it:

For them, inevitably, the test of each move or happening is this: Does it help towards our liberation? Does it end the domination of one country over another? Will it enable us to live freely the life of our choice in cooperation with others? Does it bring equality and equal opportunity for nations as well as groups within each nation? Does it hold forth the promise of an early liquidation of poverty and illiteracy and bring better living conditions?

That Nehru did not deal separately with the possible Indian attitude towards international politics in the post-war world, but only with that of the millions in Asia and Africa shows his identification of Indian interests with those of the other countries in the two continents. He also clearly realized that nationalism represented the dominant urge of all these countries. 'Large parts of Asia and Africa,' he wrote 'consist of an awakened, discontented humanity no longer prepared to tolerate existing conditions.' They would not seek domination over others and welcome all attempts at international co-operation, but they were bound to scrutinize such attempts closely with a view to finding out whether they did not represent 'another device for continuing the old domination'. Nehru particularly saw a close bond uniting India with the other countries of Asia. 'Conditions and problems,' he wrote, 'differ greatly in the various countries of Asia, but throughout this vast area, in China and India, in South-East Asia, in Western Asia, and the Arab world run common threads of sentiment and invisible links which hold them together.'¹⁰⁴

Nehru's preoccupation with the freedom of Asian and African countries, including India, affected his predilection as between the United States and the Soviet Union. Though he apprehended the pursuit of expansionism by both the United States and the Soviet Union, it was primarily the impact of their policies on the achievement of freedom by India and other Asian and African countries which shaped his attitude towards them. The complete silence of the Government of the United States at the time of the Quit India challenge in 1942, had filled his mind with doubt regarding the willingness of that country to support India in her struggle for freedom against Britain. He, of course, realized that opinion in the United States was not as solidly behind Churchill's determination not to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire as opinion in the United Kingdom, but noted that British

propaganda had produced results. He also estimated that the American people felt that the Indian problem was too complicated for them to tackle and that in any case it was difficult for them to interfere in the affairs of their British ally. The Soviet Union had also remained silent about India in 1942, but Nehru treated it as the result of her own critical condition at that time. He was convinced that in its own interest the Soviet Union could not ignore India. Such a hopeful attitude is borne out by the fact that he quoted a passage from Stalin's statement regarding Soviet war aims in November 1942, which did not mention India at all, but only such general principles as the abolition of racial exclusiveness, equality of nations, liberation of enslaved nations and the right of every nation to arrange its affairs according to its own wishes.¹⁰⁵

In thinking about the Soviet Union, Nehru also took into account the fact that India was very close to the borders of that powerful country. In physical and economic power, he observed, there would be none capable of challenging her on the European continent. His old liking for the Soviet Union because of her socialism also continued. No other country, according to him, presented such a politically solid and economically well-balanced picture as the Soviet Union, though some of the recent developments there had shocked many of her old admirers. Besides, Nehru continued to believe that imperialism was primarily a product of capitalism. Socialist economy could be made self-sufficient and, therefore, unlike the capitalist variety, did not necessarily lead to expansionism. If the Soviet Union followed an expansionist policy, that would be due not to an economic urge associated with capitalism, but to her old suspicion of Western powers and the fear of being encircled by them.¹⁰⁶

Such fears were inevitable so long as nations continued to be guided by theories of geopolitics and balance of power. Nor could isolationism provide any solution to the world's problems. The hope for the future lay in the rejection of such theories and the adoption in their place of the ideal of international co-operation based on the principles of freedom and equality. In the words of Nehru:

There really seems no alternative between world conquest and world association; there is no choice of a middle course. The old divisions and the quest of power politics have little meaning today and do not fit in with our environment, yet they continue. The interests and activities of states overflow their boundaries and are world-wide. No nation can isolate itself or be indifferent to the political or economic fate of other countries. If there is no cooperation there is bound to be friction with its inevitable results. Cooperation can only be on a basis of equality and mutual welfare, on a pulling up of the backward nations and peoples to a common level of well-being and cultural advancement, on an elimination of racialism and domination.¹⁰⁷

It was for such international co-operation that free India was to strive. And India's effort was bound to make a difference. For Nehru had no doubt that India was marked out for a major role in world affairs. According to him, India, along with China, was potentially capable of joining the small group of powers who could stand on their own feet, the only other such countries being the United States, the Soviet Union and, if the resources of her empire were added to her own, Britain. Indeed Nehru estimated India's potential resources as probably even more varied and extensive than China's. Moreover, the Pacific was likely to replace the Atlantic as the nerve centre of the world, and though not a Pacific power India would inevitably exercise great influence there. India would also develop as the centre of political and economic activity in the Indian Ocean area, in South-East Asia and right up to the Middle East.¹⁰⁶

Thus Nehru's world view encompassed a strong and powerful India, having an Asian identity but co-operating with all parts of the world on the basis of equality for the eventual fulfilment of the ideal of one world, free from all traces of domination and exploitation and bound together by the ties of human fellowship. He thus summed up this world view towards the end of his great book:

We are citizens of no mean country and we are proud of the land of our birth, of our people, our culture and traditions. That pride should not be for a romanticised past to which we want to cling; nor should it encourage exclusiveness or a want of appreciation of other ways than ours. It must never allow us to forget our many weaknesses and failings or blunt our longing to be rid of them. . . . It was India's way in the past to welcome and absorb other cultures. That is much more necessary today, for we march to the one world of tomorrow where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of the human race. We shall therefore seek wisdom and knowledge and friendship and comradeship wherever we can find them, and cooperate with others in common tasks, but we are no supplicants for others' favours and patronage. Thus we shall remain true Indians and Asiatics, and become at the same time good internationalists and world citizens.¹⁰⁷

It was this vision which shaped Nehru's reactions to major international developments between June 1945, when he was released from prison, and August 1947, when India became independent. They clearly contain in an outline form all the main elements of India's foreign policy as enunciated by him after the achievement of independence. This is best illustrated by the text of his broadcast on 7 September 1946 as Vice-President of the Interim National Government, where he boldly proclaimed the policy of non-alignment, extended India's hands of friendship to all nations on the basis of freedom and equality, and

pledged her to work for the practical realization of the ideal of one world. As he put it:

We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom anywhere must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war. . . .

The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer cooperation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this One World that free India will work, a world in which there is free cooperation of the peoples, and no class or group exploits another.¹¹⁰

This did not mean hostility towards the great powers. On the contrary, Nehru took special care to declare that, in spite of the past history of conflict, free India would have friendly and co-operative relations with Britain and the other countries of the British Commonwealth of Nations. He also sent India's greetings to the people of the United States of America, declaring that destiny had given them a major role in international affairs and expressing his hope that this would be utilized in the interest of peace and human freedom. He greeted the Soviet Union in equally warm terms, describing it as 'that other great nation of the modern world . . . which also carries a vast responsibility for shaping world events.'

Nehru made special mention of the fact that the Indian people belonged to Asia and the peoples of Asia were nearer and closer to them than others. The future was bound to see a closer union between India and South-East Asia on one side, and Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab world on the other. India must devote herself to the furtherance of this close association. Proceeding further, Nehru referred to the struggle for freedom then going on in Indonesia and conveyed India's good wishes for its success. He made a special mention of China, describing her as 'that mighty country with a mighty past, our neighbour', stressing that she had been India's friend through the ages, and hoping that this friendship would endure and grow.¹¹¹

Nehru's deep interest in Asian unity found a tangible expression in the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi from 23 March to 2 April 1947, and attended by representatives from twenty-eight countries. Though it had been formally sponsored by the Indian Council of World Affairs, it was at Nehru's suggestion that that organization had taken up this work and he dominated the conference from beginning to end. Setting its tone in his inaugural address he observed:

We have no designs against anybody; ours is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world. Far too long have we of Asia been petitioners in Western courts and chancelleries. That story must now belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own legs and to cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be the playthings of others.¹¹²

In this atomic age, Nehru further stressed, Asia would have to function effectively for the maintenance of peace. Indeed there could be, according to him, no peace, unless Asia played her part. They had arrived at a stage in human affairs when the ideal of 'One World' or some kind of a world federation seemed to be essential, though there were many dangers and obstacles in the way, Asians should work for that ideal and not for any grouping which came in the way of this larger world group. They, therefore, supported the United Nations structure which was painfully emerging from its infancy. But in order to have 'One World', they must also think of the countries of Asia co-operating together for that larger ideal.¹¹³

While pursuing the ideals of peace, freedom and equality among nations, and nurturing the visions of 'One World' and Asian unity, Nehru always remained conscious of India's manifest destiny to play a major role in world affairs in general and Asian affairs in particular. When in July 1945 the Congress Working Committee considered the work of the San Francisco Conference of the United Nations, obviously at Nehru's instance, it expressed regret at the fact that, because of lack of independent status, India had been deprived of a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations Organization, which it regarded as her rightful due. India, the Committee declared, must have a place in the highest councils of nations.¹¹⁴ A few months later, Nehru wrote in the course of an article on Asian affairs that, whether one talked of West Asia or South-East Asia or China, all impinged on India and all depended on India economically, politically and strategically. They could not help looking at India and India could not help looking at them. In the modern world it was inevitable for India to be at 'the centre of things' in Asia.¹¹⁵ In his broadcast on 7 September 1946 as Vice-President of the Interim National Government, Nehru declared that because of her geographical location India was 'the pivot of Western, Southern and South-Eastern Asia'.¹¹⁶ Moving the resolution on the objectives of the Indian Constitution in the Constituent Assembly on 13 December 1946, he declared that events in India would have a powerful impact on the rest of the world, not only because a new free nation would come out into the arena of the world, but also because India was such a country that, by virtue of her size and population, her enormous resources and her capacity to exploit those resources, she would immediately play an important part in world affairs.¹¹⁷ While winding up the debate on that

resolution, he referred to the role of Indians as leaders of the freedom movement in Asia and to their responsibility for the leadership of a large part of Asia, the responsibility of being some kind of guide to vast numbers of people all over the world.¹¹⁸ In his inaugural address to the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi (March-April 1947) Nehru played down the term leadership, but did not at all hesitate to put forward the claim of India to be at the centre of things in Asia. As he put it:

In this conference and in this work there are no leaders and no followers. All countries of Asia have to meet together on an equal basis in a common task and endeavour. It is fitting that India should play her part in this new phase of Asian development. Apart from the fact that India herself is emerging into freedom and independence, she is the natural centre and focal point of the many forces at work in Asia. Geography is a compelling factor, and geographically she is so situated as to be the meeting point of Western and Northern and Eastern and South-East Asia. Because of this, the history of India is a long history of her relations with the other countries of Asia. Streams of culture have come to India from the West and the East and been absorbed in India, producing the rich and variegated culture which is India today. At the same time, streams of culture have flowed from India to distant parts of Asia.¹¹⁹

Needless to add, Nehru believed so ardently in India playing a major role in world affairs, not because of any desire to establish India's overlordship over any part of the world, but because of the realization that the world had become too closely knit for any nation to hold apart and the consciousness that India, because of her size, location and resources had a certain responsibility towards the rest of the world which she must fulfil, both in her own interest and in that of the rest of the world. Nehru's feelings at the time India entered the comity of nations came out best in his speech before the Constituent Assembly at midnight on 14 August 1947, just on the eve of independence. Proposing at that solemn moment that the members of the Assembly take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and to the still larger cause of humanity, he reminded them of the hard work that lay ahead in order to give effect to their dreams. Those dreams, he said, were for India, but they were also for the world. All nations were too closely knit together for anyone to imagine that it could live apart. 'Peace has been said to be indivisible, 'he concluded, 'so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.'¹²⁰

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Chapter XII

The India League

Julius Silverman

THE INDIA LEAGUE in London can be considered as the Sister Organization of the Congress Party in India. It operated in the heart of the imperialist power and mobilized the opposition of the British people to the harsh exercise of power by its own British Government in India. At the time of the struggle for independence it consisted overwhelmingly of British people, with Indian residents in the United Kingdom and Indian visitors, sometimes very distinguished visitors, participating in its activities. In its own activities and policies it mirrored the activities of the Congress Party, and reacted at once to events taking place in India. It was a unique relationship.

At an early stage, in fact in the early 1930s, the League had already become the mainstream of the British Movement for an Independent India. It is fair to say therefore that the India League (London) has an important place in the history of the Congress Party, and indeed in the history of India. The League has in fact continued its existence and performed its functions until the present day, though its object and purposes have of course changed.

The India League will always be associated with the name of Krishna Menon, whose enormous energy and political direction made the India League a great national movement.

Of course the Indian Independence Movement in the United Kingdom did not commence with the India League. Support in Britain for the nationalist movement in India goes back well into the 19th century. Indeed, at the formation of the Congress Party in 1885, several British people, including Allen Octavian Hume and Sir William Wedderburn, took part in its inception. Charles Bradlaugh, MP, noted for his struggle to enter the House of Commons without taking a religious oath, took a prominent part in the Indian nationalist struggle, and was even known as the MP for India. His associate in many of his campaigns was that extraordinary woman, Annie Besant, whose activity in politics extended

over 50 years. She took part in the industrial struggles in Britain, including the struggle of the 'Match Girls', together with Tom Mann. She was a committed socialist, and also a campaigner for women's liberation. Her service to the Indian National Movement was enormous and in 1917 she became President of the Congress Party. In 1914 she formed the 'Home Rule for India British Auxiliary' in the United Kingdom, which eventually became the India League. She pursued the tactic of approaching MPs and enlisting them in her cause. Eventually, she left politics for theosophy, which she had believed in for much of her life.

Florence Nightingale, long after her nursing days were over, was also a campaigner for Indian self-government. In the present century, George Lansbury and Keir Hardie also campaigned for a free India, and Lansbury had some association in this respect with Annie Besant. So had Keir Hardie.

In 1927 the League Against Imperialism was formed in Brussels. Fenner Brockway was for a short time president, and was followed by Jimmy Maxton. For a time this had a certain prestige and following. Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of Congress presented the League with £100 on its inception, and Reginald Bridgeman was for a long time chairman. (Bridgeman was also active in the India League.) The League Against Imperialism tended to lose its influence, especially after it was banned by the Labour Party. Bridgeman joined the Executive of the India League.

It must be said frankly that these organizations and persons did not have a great impact upon the public in Britain as a whole. The Empire still had many years to run, and the British Empire was still widely supported, sometimes on the mistaken opinion that it was the basis of prosperity for Britain and that it was also at the same time a benevolent institution designed for the emancipation of the people in the Colonies and not for their repression. The publications of Hobson, Lenin and Norman Angell were still not widely read, but it could be said that these organizations and individuals were sowing the seed for the future.

I should mention also the Indian Conciliation Committee of the Society of Friends, which operated on the optimistic view that one could solve the problems of Indian independence by peaceful discussions and conciliation. A large number of members of the Society of Friends also joined the India League, and included quite serious activists, particularly Horace Alexander and Agatha Harrison, who among others played an important part. I mention also that the well-known Charlie Andrews, close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, spoke on India League platforms.

In 1975, together with Mr Zeff Carrasco, a friend and confidant of Krishna Menon, I watched seven large packing cases begin a journey

to India. Their contents — papers, documents, letters — stored by Krishna Menon, who had left all these papers to the State of India in his will, with an instruction that they should not be opened until after his death. They then became the property of the Indian Government. The contents embraced the whole wide story of the India League, the major channel of the Indian independence movement in the United Kingdom, and indeed a good deal of the history of India and the Congress Party. There were India League pamphlets written by Krishna Menon himself and others. Many of the letters were personal and important ones from Jawaharlal Nehru to Krishna Menon. I am told that only one person obtained access to these papers during Krishna Menon's life-time and that was Mr T.J.S. George, who used these as the basis for his very remarkable biography of Krishna Menon. Today these papers are contained in the Nehru Memorial Library at Teen Murti, New Delhi. They have been listed but not yet catalogued. My wife and I had the privilege of spending several weeks in the library going through these manuscripts, which proved invaluable in writing the history of the India League and the Indian independence movement in the United Kingdom.

I have already mentioned that Annie Besant founded the Home Rule for India British Auxiliary in 1914. By 1927 or thereabouts, it had already become the Commonwealth of India League. Krishna Menon first came to London under the sponsorship of Annie Besant in 1924. He very soon joined the Commonwealth of India League, and in 1928 became its joint secretary. Very largely on account of his energy and drive, the basis of the League altered. By 1930 it had become a national body, whereas before it was simply another London-based organization. There were in fact 13 branches in the provinces:

Bournemouth, Birmingham, with Fred Longden, MP as chairman.
 Bradford Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester,
 with Miss M. Pontefract as a very energetic secretary.
 Merthyr, Middlesbrough, and Southampton.
 There were at least eleven branches in London-Hackney, Holloway,
 Leytonstone, Norwood, Richmond and Twickenham, St Pancras, Tooting,
 Walthamstow, Westminster and Wimbledon.

All this had been achieved within two years.

This was a very good period for the League. The ground was favourable because there was a Labour Government and Labour MPs were active in speaking in support, but also a decisive point was the drive of Krishna Menon who, apart from organizing, went round to speak at many of the meetings of branches. At this time, Peter Freeman, MP was the chairman of the League and Miss A.A. Purcell, A.J. Cook (a well-

known miners' leader), Fred Longden, MP, James Marley, MP and Dr Marion Phillips, MP were active supporters. Many other MPs supported the League, especially Labour MPs.

The object of the League is described in extracts from the history of the Commonwealth of India League published in 1930 as:

To secure Dominion Status for India. The League aims at assisting in the establishment of full self-government for India and for making India's association with Great Britain one of complete equality and free will.

In September last the General Council of the League adopted as its basis of policy and propaganda India's right to:

1. A National Government responsible to her people.
2. Full economic control.
3. Control of India's Defence Forces.
4. Settlement of British claims and concessions, including the Public Debt by an independent tribunal.
5. The right to secede from the Empire.

The Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Committee have from time to time passed resolutions affirming and demanding India's right to determine her own future.

The organization, particularly the Parliamentary Committee, served an extremely important function. At this time there were 23 MPs associated in one way or another with the work of the League, and a few members of the Executive Committee. The Parliamentary Committee discussed policy, advised the Executive, raised Indian questions in the House of Commons, and by deputations and the like placed the League's point of view before the Government. The Parliamentary secretary also endeavoured to keep in touch with Indian opinions. The Committee also arranged for several meetings of members of the House of Commons to be addressed by leading Indians.

There were nearly sixty people actively working from day to day for the League. The headquarters were then entirely run by voluntary labour, and have always been so. Its workers, particularly in the provinces, were actively associated with other movements and raised the Indian question in these other bodies.

The League published the following pamphlets:

1. *The Parable of a Conquered State*
2. *Our Duty to India* by Peter Freeman, MP
3. *India: Our Responsibilities* by Mrs Margaret Graham
4. *Indian Labour and Self-Government* by B. Shiva Rao
5. *Plantation Labour in India*, with a preface by A.A. Purcell
6. *The Peril in India. A Reply to the 'Daily Mail,'* published by the Bristol Branch
7. *How it looks from India* by H.N. Brailsford

In 1931, the catastrophic defeat of the Labour Government damaged the morale of the League and it lost a good many of its active supporters in Parliament. However, out of the fifty returned Labour MPs, nineteen joined the India League's Parliamentary Committee.

It was at this time, at the end of 1931, when Gandhi was in London, that the League took a major part in the reception committee which organized Mahatma Gandhi's programme in London, and also organized Gandhi's several meetings with Members of Parliament. In particular they arranged at short notice an all-Party meeting of Members of Parliament, together with the Mahatma when he spoke about the existing position in India. In addition a meeting between Gandhi and Labour Members of Parliament and members of the Executive of the India League was held at the home of Vice-Chairman, J.F. Horrobin. The Executive and officers of the League were Bertrand Russell, Chairman; J.F. Horrobin, MP, Vice-Chairman; James Marley, MP, Parliamentary Secretary; Richard A. Harman, Treasurer; Krishna Menon and Jack Blundell, Joint Secretaries. The Labour Members of Parliament invited to meet Gandhi were: Charles Brown, Tom Cape, D.R. Grenfell, G.D. Hall, Neil Maclean, Gordon Macdonald, D.G. Logan, W. Leonard, W. John, J. Tinker, E.J. Williams, Tom Williams, James Maxton, George Lansbury, Aneurin Bevan, Joseph Devlin, Graham White, George Hicks. There was also a Reception at the Central Hall, where Gandhi met members of the India League. He commended the work being done by the India League, and hoped that the propaganda would be intensified.

The Executive members of the League were: Horace Alexander, Fenner Brockway, MP, Winifred Horrobin, Fred Longden, MP, Mrs Brijlal Nehru, Wilfred Wellcock, MP and A.J. Cook (Indian Labour Committee).

At the beginning of 1932 the change in the name of the League to India League became effective. The object of the League would cease to be dominion status, but was to be self-government (swaraj). In a circular sent out to the branches it was stated that the signatories hoped that India would remain in the Commonwealth, and this would have many advantages for India and Britain, but the decision should be a matter for the Indian nation itself. Therefore the new name did not rule out dominion status. This change was in line with Congress Party policy.

In 1932 also Peter Freeman resigned from the Chairmanship of the League and Bertrand Russell became the Chairman, and the League embarked upon a very important mission.

Mission to India

A letter was sent on 17 March 1932, signed by J.F. Horrobin and Krishna

Menon, to the Joint Council of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, which is here set out:

COPY

THE INDIA LEAGUE

146, Strand,
W.C. 2.
17th March 1932

To the Joint Council of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress.

Gentlemen,

The India League ventures to approach the Joint Council of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress with the suggestion that it should consider the present position in India, and make a declaration that might serve to rally opinion in this country, and at the same time to convince Indians that they are not wholly without support.

Much would be gained if such a declaration were to outline the broad facts of the present repression, about which the general public is, for the most part, thanks to the censorship, in ignorance.

It is not generally realised how wanton and unprovoked is the present repression, for the struggle was deliberately precipitated by Lord Willingdon's refusal to discuss the situation with Mr Gandhi.

In our view, by its aggressive action against the Nationalist Movement, the Government is only deepening India's discontent, and driving the people towards revolutionary despair. After the experience of these months of repression, it is useless to expect from the mass of Indians any patient consideration of the Round Table Constitution. It was, at best, a poor compromise which India might have considered only if she had believed firmly in British goodwill and good faith. Such disposition as there was to trust us, has been wholly dissipated by this attempt to terrorise the nation into acquiescence.

May we recall to you in the barest outline what is going on:

(1) Some twenty thousand persons were in prison by the end of January for non-violent political offences, mostly for terms ranging from six months to two years.

(2) Most of the leaders of the Nationalist Movement, e.g. Mr Sen Gupta, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and, of course, Mr Gandhi himself, were imprisoned or deported without trial.

(3) Villages are subject to collective fines imposed by executive officials without judicial process.

(4) Trials before special tribunals are held in camera and at these secret sittings a suspect may be sentenced to death in his absence.

(5) Coercive ordinances originally devised to cope with terrorism have been extended to districts, where the agitation is purely economic. Peasants, driven by the fall of agricultural prices, to declare a No Rent Strike, have been shot down in several provinces.

(6) The Air Force is being used in the North West Frontier Province to bomb villages from the air, where disaffection is suspected; many houses have been deliberately set on fire, and numerous casualties are admitted.

(7) The complete muzzling of the press in India removes the usual check of publicity on the conduct of officials and police, against whom responsible Indians do not hesitate to make grave charges of brutality and torture.

This policy of coercion calls for the sharpest condemnation. Our documents are at your service if you should think it well to publish a brief survey of the facts which would rest on dependable evidence.

We would ask the Joint Council to receive a deputation consisting of Mr Bertrand Russell, Mr H.N. Brailsford, Mr H.J. Laski, Mr J.F. Horrobin and our Secretary, who will urge on the Council the desirability of a definite stand.

SIGNED

J.F. HORROBIN	<i>Vice-Chairman</i>
K. MENON	<i>Secretary</i>

It will be noted that the letter stated details of the dangerous situation in India, and asked that a deputation consisting of Bertrand Russell, H.N. Brailsford, H.J. Laski, J.F. Horrobin and the Secretary should meet the Joint Council. It is not clear from the papers what the result of the delegation was, but the India League decided to send a delegation to India in order that they might personally investigate the matters contained in their letter to the Joint Council.

The League and Krishna Menon went to considerable trouble to arrange this visit and also its finance. The eventual delegation consisted of Monica Whatley, Ellen Wilkinson and Leonard Matters, all three Members of Parliament, and Krishna Menon as Secretary of the India League. Krishna Menon, with the assistance of Bertrand Russell and Harold Laski, put in a great deal of activity to raise the funds, plan the itinerary, the arrangements of contacts and the briefing of the delegates.

The delegation reached Bombay on 17 August 1932 and spent 83 days in India. Members of the delegation frequently visited certain parts separately. They went to Madras, South India, Orissa, Bengal, Assam, the United Provinces, the Punjab, the North-West Frontier, Delhi, and other places. They met people in all walks of life — Congressmen, political leaders of all Parties, businessmen, Trade Unionists. They stayed in the villages and met thousands of ordinary people and discussed with them their ordinary problems. They checked up on all the points detailed in their letter to the Joint Council of the Labour Party and the TUC and found the situation in most cases very much worse than they had anticipated: mass political repression, the imprisonment of thousands of political prisoners, in most cases in shocking conditions as regards accommodation and food. In a good many cases this included

horrible forms of torture. They found starvation or near-starvation in a number of places. They saw police attacks on peaceful demonstrations with lathis, and beating-up, and they met many of the injured people in the hospitals of Bombay, etc. The situation was so vastly different from the democratic scene in the United Kingdom that the members of the delegation were quite appalled. They found that the Viceroy and his immediate household knew little of what was happening in the country. When the delegation placed these complaints before the Viceroy and the authorities no action was taken to remedy these matters or to make any investigation.

They found also that there was a mass following for the Congress Party. When the delegation returned to the United Kingdom a book was published of 530 pages which was called *The Condition of India*. The establishment press and the Commonwealth Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, reacted most violently, which proved that the book and its stark disclosures had made a considerable impact.

The delegation made its initial report to a great meeting in Kingsway Hall on 26 November. There was a formidable platform with Bertrand Russell in chair. It included George Lansbury, MP, Professor Harold Laski, Tom Williams, MP, John Jagger, MP, Stafford Cripps, MP, the Dowager Countess of Warwick, H.N. Brailsford and J.F. Horrobin.

The position of the League in 1933 was in every respect a very difficult one, both financially and in the degree of support, but the League carried on with its activities. At these stages in the League's history continuity was of the utmost importance.

An important and personal element which occurred in the 1930s was the contact and friendship which developed between Krishna Menon, the Secretary of the League, and Jawaharlal Nehru. This shows quite clearly in the correspondence in the Krishna Menon papers in the Teen Murti Library in New Delhi. This produced a cross-fertilization of ideas and also established an important link between the India League and the Congress Party, especially the more radical and progressive sections of the Congress Party. This correspondence and friendship commenced in 1935 and when Nehru came to London in 1936 and also in 1938 his programme was arranged by the League and especially by Krishna Menon, who also was responsible for organizing his engagements in Europe. There was a great reception committee to meet Nehru and to pay tribute to him at his first meeting. At a meeting in Caxton Hall the speakers included Sir Stafford Cripps, KC, MP, David Grenfell, MP, Aldous Huxley, John Jagger, MP, W.T. Kelly, MP, Professor Harold Laski, Mrs Saklatvala, Ellen Wilkinson, MP, and Tom Williams, MP — a most interesting platform.

Nehru received from Krishna Menon a letter relating all the engagements which he had fixed for him. It was a very formidable programme, but Nehru carried it out.

Nehru's visit was of course great success and added a fillip to the activities of the League, and also to the knowledge of the British public about the actual situation in India. Nehru came again in 1938 and the following is a letter sent to him by Krishna Menon:

165 Strand,
London, W.C.2.
24th May 1938

Jawaharlal Nehru Esq.,
C/O G.P. Hutheesingh Esq.,
Warden Road
Bombay

My dear Jawaharlal Nehru

Engagements

The present arrangements are as follows:

Travel from Italy to Spain.

Return to Paris about 20th.

Broadcast in Paris on the 21st

Press Conference in London on Thursday 23rd

24-26 Week-end Stafford Cripps.

27th Monday Public Welcome in London.

30th June meet members of the Indian community (large gathering).

May have to go to Paris if the great international rally to call for arms for Spain and to save the republic comes off.

Awaiting to hear from Dolivet.

5th July Tuesday: Royal Institute of International Affairs,
Subject "India Today"

6th July: Lecture on "India Today" at the Large Queen's Hall (Left Book Club) open to public (Collection for Congress medical mission to China)

6th or 7th July morning: Dr Shewrood Eddy's Americans at Toynbee Hall.

8th July Friday: Indian London Majlis (Students) Tea time.

9 & 10 July Week-end: Lord Lothian

15th and 16th: Conference "PEACE and EMPIRE"

Presidential speech Friday evening, committees Saturday till 3.

Plenary session Saturday 4 till seven.

17th July: National Independence Demonstration in co-operation with Chinese and Spain organizations at Trafalgar Square, for Indian, Chinese and Spanish freedom presenting all as part of one problem.

We are planning for a large scale demonstration of about 20,000 people.

It is the anniversary of the two republics too.

These items only refer to public engagements. I have not included interviews or meetings with groups arranged at private invitations of useful people.

I want to plead not guilty to any effort at trying to make an "overwhelming programme" but these are the public engagements of which I thought you would like due notice. The requests and pressure for one thing and another comes in and I am always puzzled to know whether to accept or reject anything. Miss Harrison is very helpful and so have some of the more responsible members of the Indian community.

With regard to this programme I want to draw attention to the fact that there are two lectures in it one at least of which you may want to draft on the boat. The presidential address on Peace and Empire which I have little doubt will become a historic document. There is also Gollancz's queen's hall lecture on India today. He himself does not insist or ask for a written speech and it would be sufficient if you speak from your notes or any other way and answer questions. I want to say that this is a set lecture. There are no other speakers at this meeting. The hall accommodates 2500.

For this meeting and the Royal Institute (Lothian's arrangement) I gave the subject "India Today" as they wanted a title. It is the least committal and the most inclusive one I could think of. If you want to change it please let me know. It is understood that you speak on whatever you like.

After writing thus far I have had a telephone call from the British National Committee of the I.P.C. and the National Council of Civil Liberties wanting to hold receptions officially. I could not find my way to refusing these and so I with due politeness accepted them on your behalf. So the programme becomes more and more overwhelming as the days go by but I am not trying to pack it. I take it that the interviews have to be arranged taking care not to pack them in to a whole day.

Yours Affectionately

I think that Nehru was appalled by the weight of the arrangements made for him. Nonetheless he fulfilled them. The arrangements included a journey to Spain, where the Spanish civil war was then proceeding, and the democratic Government in Spain was fighting for its life.

The following is the text of a letter sent by Nehru to Krishna Menon on the completion of his visit, which commends the work carried out by the India League activists and offering to meet them when he comes back to London and before he leaves for India. It will be noted that Krishna

Menon always addressed Nehru as 'Dear Jawaharlal Nehru' and closed his letters 'Yours affectionately', whereas Nehru addressed him as 'Krishna'.

Bexhill
11-10-35

My dear Krishna,

During these past few months I have come into close contact with many of the young men and women who work for the India League, and a feeling of comradeship has grown between us. I have admired the way they have given their time and services in the cause of Indian freedom, and I shall often think of them when I am far away in India. Soon I shall be going back home. Before I go I should very much like to meet them again and to say goodbye to them. As I am leaving on the 24th morning perhaps the best time for us to meet will be the 23rd afternoon. I suggest therefore that we might all foregather at Ormonde House on the 23rd October (Sunday) at 4 p.m.

Will you kindly consult your colleagues and let me know!

Yours

Jawaharlal Nehru

The 1930s was a period of undoubted achievement by the India League. It had established extraordinarily useful contacts in parliament, especially with Labour members, but also with liberals, and outside parliament with all sorts of organizations, churches, etc.

In September 1939 there came a new crisis. Britain was at war with Germany. The people of Britain had other things to think about apart from India and especially their own personal problems. By the summer of 1940, after the defeat in France, Britain was alone fighting for its own survival. The Battle of Britain in the air was being fought out, and India was very far away. The severe bombing of London in the autumn and winter of 1940-1, which caused endless destruction and loss of life, was taking place, and Krishna Menon — now a London Borough of St Pancras Councillor and air-raid warden — was heavily engaged in the night and often until the early hours of the morning. He performed his duties with extraordinary courage. The 'blitz' created a good deal of disruption, and political life was almost impossible. There was naturally a lull in the India League's activities, although the 'News India' was still being issued, and there were still some small educational meetings being held. The outlook for the League was however very desperate indeed. Little did the League supporters realize that in a very short time

there would be a huge upsurge in their activities, and they would be required to wage their greatest and final battle, for which purpose a great expansion of their efforts would be necessary to achieve the fulfilment of the League's objective — freedom for India.

In 1940 the war intensified in Europe after the invasion of Belgium, Holland and France by the Nazi forces. The Chamberlain government collapsed and a new government was formed under Winston Churchill, in which the Labour Party participated.

The Labour Party was committed to victory over Germany. They had seen the destruction of democracy and of their socialist comrades in Europe, and they knew the war was already a war against Fascism, but Churchill was leader of the Coalition. Here was a great dilemma. Churchill was wholly committed to victory over Fascist Germany, but also he was the leader who was not 'prepared to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire.' This dilemma was also the dilemma of the Labour Party and the Cabinet. Victory over Fascism was essential.

This offers some explanation of the reluctance of Labour leaders to come out boldly for the liberation of India, even leaders like Stafford Cripps who had been wholehearted supporters of the League before the war. Russia came into the war in 1941 on the side of the democracies and this undoubtedly had an enormous influence on the ideological face of the war. This was multiplied when Italy and Japan came in on the side of Germany, and America was brought into the war at Pearl Harbour. The sheep were being separated from the goats. Increasingly the war had become an ideological war against Fascism and for democracy.

In India in the meantime the viceroy declared India at war in 1939 without consultation with any of the parties in India, or any other bodies of public opinion, or anybody else. The Indian people, and especially the members of Congress, were outraged that, in a war ostensibly for democracy, a nation of 350 million people should be brought into a war without being consulted at all. Civil disobedience commenced, and Nehru and other Indian leaders were for a time jailed. They were subsequently released.

In 1942 Cripps made his visit to India with a set of proposals, which however did not begin to meet the Congress demands. In particular a major demand of Congress was for a provisional national government. A pamphlet was issued by the League in Great Britain setting out the proposals made by Cripps on behalf of the British Government, which he said would have to be accepted in total without amendment. These proposals were rejected by Congress, which then went on to pass the well-known 'Quit India' resolution. The name was perhaps a misnomer.

The resolution did not call for the withdrawal of British defence forces from India, but offered to mobilize the assistance of the Indian people in the war effort under a people's government. However, the British Government, ignoring all the lessons of the past proceeded to jail Nehru and Gandhi and all the Congress leaders. The consequence was inevitable. The struggle intensified and civil disobedience and disruption multiplied on a massive scale.

Reflecting the situation in India there was a rapid increase in activities by the India League. Meetings were held throughout the country. New branches were created — Newcastle with Arthur Blenkinsop; Birmingham with Julius Silverman as Chairman, and A.H. Sader and Dani Prem as Joint Secretaries; also in Glasgow; Edinburgh, Dundee and many other places in Scotland. Mary Baxter (now Mary Guelvaugar) was especially active in organizing and speaking at these meetings including meetings at Miners Lodges; and a meeting at the Central Hall of the India League for the British Labour Party in 1943 with 2,200 in the audience. By now the Soviet Union was in the war and Hitler's air force had been diverted to the East. The practical consequence was that the bombing of London and the provinces almost completely stopped. The people of Britain heaved a sigh of relief and political matters could now come back almost to something like normal.

All this required a good deal of administration and secretarial assistance, and there were a number of people prepared to give their help. These included Anna Pollock, a well-known opera singer, Miss Norah Blacklock, Miss McGrath, Miss Tolfree, Bridget Tunnard, Mrs Handoo and Mrs Prella, Christine Shaddick. Anna (Emily) Pollack often acted as Assistant Secretary. All these people, as everybody in the League, gave their service free. There was not a single paid worker.

There was an increased demand for speakers which it was difficult to meet, even with many Labour MPs and Parliamentary candidates participating. There was also a great and increasing demand for literature. One pamphlet published was *Britain's Prisoner*, which dealt with Nehru. There was a demand from Labour Party and Trade Union branches, from the Fabian Society, from Rotary Clubs, old age pensioners' societies, universities, housewives' clubs, etc. The demand was a broad one, but it came particularly from Labour Party and Trade Union meetings. For instance, at one meeting convened in 1943 in support of the Labour Movement for the Freedom for India, the following spoke: B.G. Barstow, MP, S.O. Davies, MP, J. Mack, MP, Fred Messer, MP, John Parker, MP, W. Dobbie, MP, R. Sorenson, MP, Alexander Sloan, MP, J. Oldfield, MP, Evelyn Walkden, MP, H.B. Morgan, MP, together with J.H. Potts and Percy Collick from the Trade Union movement. At a public meeting in Sparkbrook, Birmingham,

Reginald Sorenson spoke in conjunction with Palme Dutt. This was Amery's constituency. Support for this meeting came from the Birmingham City Labour Party, the Birmingham Co-operative Party and the Birmingham Trades Council. Julius Silverman, the Chairman of the League's Group in Birmingham, was the Vice-Chairman of the Birmingham Borough Labour Party. A meeting was also held in the Birmingham Town Hall with an attendance of 1,100 at which Julius Silverman took the chair.

A number of Liberals participated in this activity, including Clem Davies, leader of the Liberal Party, who was a long and faithful supporter, Wilfred Roberts, MP, Lady Bonham-Carter, daughter of Asquith, and Mrs Corbett-Ashby, and several others. The Communist Party always gave very powerful support in the organization of meetings, and also in the provision of speakers, including Harry Pollit, Rajni Palme Dutt, Ben Bradley and others. There were speakers from the Trade Unions, and I mention especially John Horner of the Fire Brigades Union, who spoke at a number of meetings.

Outdoor meetings and factory-gate meetings were held. Krishna Menon traversed the whole country many times, sometimes speaking twice on the same evening. His energy was obviously amazing.

In 1943 the Bengal famine broke out, and British soldiers saw the emaciated inhabitants and the corpses in the streets. This was clearly the responsibility of the British Government, and especially of Leopold Amery, the Secretary of State. This was clearly the failure of the British administration whilst the Congress leaders were in jail, and there was the strongest argument for their release.

The major target was the Labour Party and Labour Movement, which was now on the move, though the leadership was still holding back. The League published two very good pamphlets. One was, *British Prisoner* relating to Nehru, mentioned earlier, also the exposure of the policy of Leopold Amery, who was Secretary of State for India, but the main theme was 'Mobilize India for a War Against Fascism'.

The Labour Party Conferences were a particular target for India League propaganda. It was frequently good tactics to use the services of prominent trade unionists rather than the people known as India League activists. The 1944 Labour Party Conference was absolutely crucial. At this Conference Mr C.W. Bridges of the National Union of Railwaymen, moved the following resolution:

This Conference, being of the opinion that the granting of freedom to the people of India to establish an independent Indian national government, will be a decisive factor in the fight against Fascism and towards the

unification of all anti-Fascist forces, urges the immediate ending of the political deadlock by negotiation with all leaders of the Indian people with a view to the formation of a responsible national government which will rally the entire population of India to the anti-fascist cause. With a view to facilitating negotiations we call for the release of the Indian political leaders.

He was supported by Dr S. Data of Bristol Constituency Labour Party, and the Rev R.W. Sorenson, MP also supported the resolution. During this debate Mr A.J. Lewis of the Municipal and General Workers' Union, took part and read a letter from his brother which described the situation as he had known it in Calcutta; the evidence of wealth and side-by-side the starvation and people dying in the streets.

Come with me behind the scenes and see a little of the sordid side, the part that is causing such a furore in press and political circles today: the famine of India The scene is Calcutta, the second largest city of the British Empire, a modern city like those of Britain. To your eyes a place of plenty; no poverty or squalor. We commence our visit to this wondrous place by walking through the main thoroughfare. On every side you see evidence of wealth. We will adjourn for lunch. What do you want — chicken, pork, caviare. Ah, you say, this is proof that this city is lacking nothing in the way of victuals. . . . Lunch over, we will continue our walk. This time we will leave Chowringee and see what there is of interest in the maze and labyrinth of side streets. . . . A man has collapsed just in front of us. This emaciated creature bears no resemblance to a human; look how his ribs are forcing themselves through the skin. It must be many a day since he partook of a meal, even of the scantiest sort. But, you say, that is impossible, have we not seen that food is very plentiful and that there is proof of wealth all around us? Do you not see, now that the skin is off your eyes, indisputable proof of the starvation that is so prevalent in Calcutta? Look at that poor soul there; will he get to the end of the street before he too passes from this world? I am afraid not. . . .

This had a profound effect upon the Party Conference. The resolution was overwhelmingly carried, although it was opposed by Mr James Walker on behalf of the National Executive. This was a decisive victory inside the Labour Party. The Party was now firmly committed to the release of the Indian political leaders and immediate negotiations for independence. The League still persisted with its propaganda, and would not allow this victory to be forgotten.

At the next Party Conference in 1945 the question of the delay in meeting Amery was discussed and the Rev R.W. Sorenson, MP put the following question:

I want to draw the attention of the Conference to the section on India and to know what precise action has been taken. I understand that a deputation

has at last waited on Mr Amery in order to implement the resolution carried practically unanimously at the Conference of our Party last year. Many leaders of the Indian Nationalist Movement are still in custody. Are the Executive going to give a report both on what they did with the resolution of the meeting last December and what transpired as a result of their interview with Mr Amery?

Mrs E. Denington also asked a question, to which Harold Laski on behalf of the National Executive, said:

The delay was not upon our side. Almost immediately after the last Conference we asked Mr Amery to receive a deputation. He explained to us that conversations were then proceeding on the Indian situation, and asked us to wait until he would be in a position to offer us some information. When we visited him last week he explained that he had hoped to be able to put the proposals of the Government before us, but the Cabinet had not yet arrived at a conclusion, and that we should be able to only have a general discussion. In fact, we had a full and frank discussion with Mr Amery. The speech that he made to us we examined in detail, and we warned Mr Amery that unless we were satisfied with the Government proposals we should be compelled to go forward and act in the letter and spirit of the resolution passed at the last Conference of this Party.

This Conference took place within weeks of a general election at which Labour secured a very great victory. The defeat of Winston Churchill came as a great surprise to many, but it did mean that the major antagonist to Indian freedom was now reduced to opposition. Numbers of Labour candidates who had supported the India League on its platform were now in Parliament. Indeed one hundred MPs joined the Parliamentary Committee of the League in the first few weeks. It was a powerful lobby right inside the Parliamentary Party. The propaganda went on with many Labour MPs participating. One of the objects of their propaganda now was to prevent Indian troops being used in battles to retain colonial rule in the Far East.

A meeting took place at Livingstone Hall in 1945 to protest against the use of the army for military action against the peoples of Indonesia and Indo-China. At this meeting there spoke L.J. Callaghan (later Prime Minister of the United Kingdom), Tom Driberg, MP, Lester Hutchinson, MP, John Platts-Mills, MP and Krishna Menon. There was also a great mass meeting on the 14 November to protest against the use of force against these peoples, and many other meetings took place.

A back-bench delegation of MPs was sent by Parliament to India in 1946. This included two India League stalwarts, Reginald Sorenson,

who had been Parliamentary Secretary for many years and a prominent front-line fighter for Indian independence, and also Arthur Bottomley. They came back and reported upon the situation in India. From this report it is quite clear that the retention of British rule in India would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. In his book, Lord Sorenson dealt with the League, and his description of Krishna Menon was undoubtedly true. He also pointed out there were still obstructionists in the Labour Party's leadership prejudiced against the idea of Indian independence. He says for instance:

Notwithstanding dark insinuation to me by Ernest Bevin when a Government Minister that he knew 'where you get your money to pay for your propaganda' the League's funds were secured entirely from collections, subscriptions and donations from individuals in this country. When I attempted to assure Mr Bevin of this and challenged him to prove the contrary, he rose from the chair at the small gathering where he had met me and a few colleagues, and mutely lumbered off. Later I had confirmation of my presumption that the totally unfounded suspicion hinted by the massive ex-Trade Union leader was shared by some other members of the Government. . . .

(It is fair to point out that when Krishna Menon became the first High Commissioner for India his contacts with Ernest Bevin were useful and productive.)

However, the League carried on with its activities and this opposition could not be sustained in the existing situation. There were a number of friends coming into the Labour administration who had been active in the India League in the past. One may mention Pethick Lawrence, the Earl of Listowel, A.V. Alexander, Stafford Cripps, Aneurin Bevan, and a mass of back-bench support for Indian independence. Moreover the situation in India was clearly deteriorating. A Cabinet Mission went to India and reported back. The final declaration of independence was now a matter of time, and with the appointment of Earl Mountbatten as Viceroy the decision was accelerated.

Unfortunately, the decision included the partition of India, but as it provided for an independent State of India it meant victory for the Congress Party and for the India League. The Indian Independence Bill was hurried through Parliament and the members of the League were jubilant.

Many Members of Parliament, especially Labour MPs, rejoiced at a Tea in the House of Commons. Many thought that now with the objective of Independence triumphantly achieved, the League could disband, but this was not Krishna Menon's view. On 10 June 1947 he

wrote the following letter from New Delhi where he had assisted in the back-room negotiations:

THE INDIA LEAGUE

New Delhi
10th June 1947

To members of The India League, friends, sympathisers and all others who have stood with us in the service of India and freedom:

We who have laboured in our small way to help achieve India's national independence and who have urged the transfer of British power to a provisional National Government for many years now, cannot but feel unhappy about the prospect of the division of India by the creation of a new State (Dominion) out of the parts that are allowed to secede.

Painful as this division is, there was no happier alternative. This is not the time to go into the question of the root cause of this division. Much of it is known. Basically it represents the success of the age-long imperialist policy of Divide and Rule, the communal electorates, and the utilisation of Indian rivalries and disunities for the retention of Imperial rule. It is also partly the result of the severe and often bloody campaigns waged against the Indian national movement, which for twenty years has withstood the attack of imperialism.

While all this is true, we would be unrealistic, unfair and foolish if we did not recognise the plan, which emerged out of discussions with Indian leaders, as a desirable, peaceful and statesmanlike measure. Much of the plan consists of remedies and proposals made by Indian nationalists themselves. It concedes Mr Jinnah's Pakistan on the basis always recognised by the democratic nationalists of India, that Indian unity cannot be based on coercion. The secession of parts of India as of right and under certain conditions, has been recognised by Congress since 1932. This had now to be accepted in practice, to avoid further bitterness, bloodshed and sterile politics.

The position that emerges from the plan is not Hindustan and Pakistan, as is assumed by certain sections of the Indian and foreign press, but *the secession of certain parts of India*.

The British Government announced its decision to transfer power by June 1948. But in its wisdom it also, with variations at times announced that such transfer to India as a whole, undivided, required the assent of the Moslem League. This assent was not available. Instead there was violence and disorder. The rest of India demanded the implementation of the Cabinet plan, to which the British Government was committed, and which it still regards as the best for India. But it was not prepared to implement the plan without League assent. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this be, the position had to be accepted.

The government of India by Britain had become impossible. Power had to be transferred, and India demanded and earnestly desired this transfer.

While the British Government's plan provides for partition, which is now a certainty, it also takes India nearer independence. India will become a Dominion, with full independence in government, and the seceding areas, unlike Northern Ireland, are also to be a Dominion, independent. The future constitution of India is to be settled not by Britain, but by India. So that this advance to independence is a real gain. The advancing of it is a free act of the British Government, and is so recognised in India.

There are many flaws and many pitfalls, but also there is opportunity, relief and fulfilment.

India understands all this. Her leaders, most of whom have served their country as have few men and women in the world, have accepted the plan. The nationalist side will work it. The League's acceptance has been delayed and qualified, but we must hope that the settlement is final.

In any event India, still with some 300 million people, can organise for their happiness and economic prosperity. The oppressed and the exploited will come into their own, for the new constitution of India will be democratic. There will be difficulties, perhaps strife, but the third party cannot intervene as before.

We had looked forward to a more glorious achievement, and we would have been happy if this were so. But we must recognise that the present is an achievement that can lead to glory and happiness.

In all this, the progressive sections of the British people, the more enlightened of her statesmen, various organisations of the people, industrial, political and religious, have played a notable part. The India League and its members may feel that for nearly eighteen years now they have actively campaigned on India's behalf. To all of them we owe gratitude.

But our task is not finished. Other functions and new hopes arise. Equally there is demand for vigilance, for the forces of reaction, both in Britain and in India, may yet attempt to render sterile our hopes and our efforts.

So at this juncture, as your Secretary, I share your hopes, your sense of achievement and your sense of the unaccomplished, and with you I remain in the cause of the service of India and freedom. As hitherto, we shall work for co-operation and understanding to mutual advantage between free Britain and free India. The two peoples have no quarrel; their cause is one. We must seek to prove it.

I hope to be with you all very soon, and together we must plan and endeavour our further tasks, the outlines of the next chapter of the History of our common endeavours in the cause that is not India's not Britain's alone, but that of freedom and humanity as a whole.

V.K. Krishna Menon

In consequence the following resolution was placed before the Executive and recommended:

RESOLUTION

The Executive Committee of the India League places on record its deep gratification at the termination of imperial rule in India and, while regretting that independence has been won only at the price of the sacrifice of Indian unity, proclaims its solemn conviction that India, emancipated, will rapidly march forward to the fulfilment of all the promises inherent in freedom, and emerge strong and united.

With the passing of the Indian Independence Act, there comes to an end an epoch in the history of Britain and India. For our own organisation likewise it ends an epoch, but it inaugurates another in which we shall continue to play an important role.

Having considered the new situation in India in all its implications, the Executive Committee of the India League makes the following recommendations to the General Meeting of members and affiliates:

(1) that the Executive Committee considers and recommends that the India League should continue to function and should adapt its approach and work to the new situation;

(2) that the main task before the League in this country is to assist the people of Britain to interpret and understand India and her problems by all possible means and to forge the unity of the peoples of both countries;

(3) that the India League has special functions and work in respect of Indians resident in this country and in British Dominions and territories overseas;

(4) that vigilance and active support on the part of League members and friends is necessary to assist India in the realisation of the fulness of her freedom;

(5) that the India League should, wherever possible, continue to exert its influence and generally assist in endeavours to promote the well-being and freedom of all people who are denied freedom or whose independence is threatened;

(6) that the India League should in the course of its work retain and promote the wide contacts it has with organisations and people in this country.

The Executive Committee recommends to the General Meeting to call upon all members, affiliates and friends, and also to direct the Executive Committee itself, to mark the achievement of India's emancipation by continued and increased endeavour on the lines indicated in this resolution.

6th August, 1947.

The meeting of members, affiliates and supporters which followed adopted this resolution and agreed that a message of congratulation should be sent to India, which is also reproduced here:

THE INDIA LEAGUE

Meeting of Members, Affiliates and Supporters 6-8-1947.

A Meeting of Members, Affiliates and Supporters of The India League was held on Wednesday 6th August 1947 at the Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. at 7 p.m., with Mrs J.K. Handoo in the Chair.

Mr Krishna Menon, who addressed the meeting, said it was his last function as an official of the India League. He gave a short account of the work of the India League since its formation, and explained that the new position in India called for a review of its work and functions and an immediate consideration of its future. He spoke also on the organisational aspects of the work. Finally Mr Krishna Menon said that owing to his appointment as High Commissioner for India in London, he must tender his resignation as General Secretary of the India League, which he did now with great regret.

Mrs Handoo said that the meeting must accept the resignation of the General Secretary with the deepest regret after his long service, and wished him all success in his new work.

Mrs Handoo then read to the meeting the Resolution on the future work of the India League, as drafted by the Executive Committee at its meeting earlier in the day and now submitted for ratification by the Members.

The resolution was received, and ratified unanimously.

Mr Krishna Menon informed the meeting that the Executive Committee had agreed at its meeting earlier in the day that two Honorary Joint Secretaries should be appointed, and had asked Mr Julius Silverman, MP and Mr J.S. Mamik to accept these positions. The meeting confirmed these appointments.

Mrs Handoo suggested that the meeting should send by cable a message of congratulation to the Government of India, and this was unanimously agreed to. The drafting of the message was left to the officers. (A copy of the cable as drafted is attached hereto.)

Mr J.S. Mamik said a few words on the work to be done by the India League. He would do his best to carry out the task which had been allotted to him, and he spoke with admiration and respect of the great work done by Mr Krishna Menon.

The meeting terminated at 9.15 p.m.

8.8.47

NLT HONBLE PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

17 YORK ROAD NEWDELHI

WELL ATTENDED GENERAL MEETING OF MEMBERS OF INDIA LEAGUE
AND FRIENDS SIXTH AUGUST UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED RESOLUTION

OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WHICH PLACED ON RECORD QUOTE ITS DEEP GRATIFICATION AT TERMINATION OF IMPERIAL RULE IN INDIA AND WHILE REGRETTING THAT INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN WON ONLY AT PRICE OF SACRIFICE OF INDIAN UNITY PROCLAIMS ITS SOLEMN CONVICTION THAT INDIA EMANCIPATED WILL RAPIDLY MARCH FORWARD TO FULFILMENT OF ALL PROMISES INHERENT IN FREEDOM AND EMERGE STRONG AND UNITED UNQUOTE STOP MEETING ACCEPTED RECOMMENDATION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE THAT LEAGUE SHOULD CONTINUE FUNCTION ASSISTING WORK FOR INDIA AND COUNTRIES STILL NOT INDEPENDENT THUS CONTRIBUTING CAUSE FREEDOM STOP WORK OF LEAGUE CARRIED OUT ENTIRELY BY UNSELFISH BRITISH AND INDIAN VOLUNTARY EFFORT CONTINUOUSLY FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS THOUGH INADEQUATELY KNOWN IN INDIA PLAYED IMPORTANT ROLE IN INDIA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE STOP SPECIAL TRIBUTE WAS PAID TO KRISHNAMENON FOR HIS UNTIRING AND SELFSACRIFICING SERVICES PARAGRAPH MEETING DIRECTED ME BY RESOLUTION CONVEY TO YOU AND GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MOST RESPECTFULLY ITS SINCERE CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR CHOICE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR INDIA IN LONDON AND FELT THIS APPOINTMENT IS APPRECIATED BY INDIANS PARLIAMENTARY AND OTHER FRIENDS OF INDIA AND PARTICULARLY BY INDIAN STUDENTS HERE.

JAI KISHORE HANDOO
CHAIRMAN OF MEETING

At this meeting this message of congratulations was sent to the Indian Government to which Nehru replied on 19 August 1947 as follows:

Many thanks for your greetings and good wishes. The India League has done yeoman service in the cause of India's freedom. Our task now is to work for the emancipation of those peoples who have not yet attained full liberty. In this work the India League can play an active and fruitful part.

(SIGNED) PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU
Prime Minister.

The League replied as follows: On 20 August 1947:

The India League is deeply grateful for your kind and appreciative cable which heartens and encourages us. We assure you we will play our part in the new tasks before us. We are glad to inform you our Executive Committee has already laid down the lines for the future in this direction, and we look forward to your support.

(SIGNED) JULIUS SILVERMAN
J.S. MAMIK
Joint Secretaries

It will be noted that Nehru approved the policy which had already been adopted by the League at its meeting, in which it proposed the work for the emancipation of all people.

At this stage let me recapitulate the reasons for the importance and success of the India League as the main channel of the struggle in the United Kingdom for Indian independence. Much arose from the terrific drive of Krishna Menon as the General Secretary, as speaker, writer, organizer and director of campaigns.

The India League has gone through bad times as well as good, great activity when new circumstances flared up, and also times when financial difficulties and lack of political interest caused great depression. Krishna, however, was absolutely indefatigable and always proceeded to carry on a great campaign. Continuity was the essential element in the League's survival.

Very important were the strong bonds between the League and the Congress Party in India, especially the radical section of the Party. The intimate friendship and political contact between Nehru and Krishna Menon was a great contribution to this on a personal basis. In consequence the League marched step by step with Congress and responded to the situation in India. This indeed was intended by Annie Besant herself when under her initiative the Home Rule for India British Auxiliary was created.

Both Nehru and Krishna were not only nationalists, but great internationalists, and in consequence the League considered India's freedom as being part of a much greater freedom for people of the whole world. The League participated and co-operated in great campaigns in favour of Republican Spain, Nationalist China and other great progressive causes. This in turn enhanced the strength of the League by attracting and impressing many people with general progressive tendencies.

The League's appeal was very broad. It embraced the churches, political parties, liberal and communist, and other political organizations, and secured the active association of many of their members. These even included a few conservatives!

But most of all its efforts were targeted at the broad Labour and Trade Union movements, and Labour MPs in Parliament who served on the League's Executive and who were active in Parliament on the question of India. In this respect also the League was active in the great tradition of Annie Besant, who initiated this mode of operation. The Labour Party proved a great reservoir of support and whilst there were some elements in the leadership resistant to the appeal of India, the basic hope was for a Labour Government to carry on its policy. In the end this is what happened.

In consequence, when the Labour Government was elected with a massive majority after the war, there existed within its Parliamentary Party a massive internal lobby and pressure group which could not possibly be resisted. Coupled with the disintegration of British rule in India victory could be delayed, but was certain. Indian independence was the beginning of the end of the colonial system all over the world.

Harold Laski struck the key-note at a great meeting on Nehru's birthday (14 November 1945) which was called by the League at St Pancras Town Hall, when he said:

Indian freedom is inevitable and inescapable, and what we have to decide is whether that freedom shall come gracefully by British co-operation or, instead, by British hostility. We have to decide whether we are capable as a Labour Party and a Labour movement of moving forward swiftly to the proud day when we can claim that we have assisted in the emancipation of a great people and in the fulfilment of the destiny of a great civilisation. We have to make up our minds.

I became Joint Secretary of the League and subsequently Secretary. This was the office that Krishna Menon had to vacate in order to become the High Commissioner for India in London. Lord Sorenson became the Chairman of the League in the place of Mr William Dobbie, MP and Krishna Menon became President.

Dr H.J. Handoo became the Vice-Chairman and the Treasurer and Organising Secretary was Bridget Tunnard, of whom I will write again. Among those who were re-elected on the Executive were Harry Adams, Horace Alexander, Dr and Mrs Bhattacharya, Reginald Bridgeman, Lord Farringdon, Mrs B. Mansell (formerly Bhativale), Miss M. Nicholson, Miss M. Whateley, Commander Edgar Young and Mrs Handoo. Bridget Tunnard was the general factotum and acting Secretary, and bore most of the day-to-day burdens. Bridget, a faithful follower of Krishna, held the fort when the League was in the Strand and John Adam Street for about thirty years and was well known to Nehru and our visitors from India.

I was the Secretary, but Bridget did the work until her sad death in 1971. She also ran the India Club, also the creation of Krishna Menon, which was closely allied with the League. The first Chairman was Lady Mountbatten, and Lord Mountbatten retained his membership until he died. Pandit Nehru performed the official opening of this Club in Craven Street in 1952.

One of its first functions was a meeting between Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir and Labour MPs to explain and discuss the Kashmir situation, at which Krishna Menon was present. As far as I know this was the only

occasion when Sheikh Abdullah visited London, and I had the privilege of showing him round the Houses of Parliament.

The India Club is now in the Strand.

The League has held regular meetings on Independence Day and on Republic Day (January 26th) and held meetings on many special occasions, particularly when notable persons from India came to London.

The League also helped to sponsor the Tagore anniversary, and every year has run an inter-racial children's party on Nehru's birthday. The League also carried on its crusade against imperialism. In 1950 there was a great packed meeting at Friends' House against apartheid in South Africa, at which Krishna Menon, Yusuf Daddoo, and Paul Robeson and others spoke. I was glad to speak on this platform. Paul Robeson sang several songs and brought the house down.

In 1952, on Independence Day, there was a great India League demonstration at the Albert hall, which was quite packed. At this meeting at which Reginald Sorenson took the chair, there spoke the Rt. Hon. Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Rt. Hon. Sir Walter Monckton, KC, MP, Compton Mackenzie, the Rt. Hon. C.R. Attlee, MP, shortly after he had ceased to be Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and Krishna Menon, High Commissioner. This indicated the new status of the India League.

In 1966 the India League initiated the statue of Gandhi in Tavistock Square, London. Lord Sorenson used his considerable influence to promote this London landmark. Harold Wilson, who was then British Prime Minister, unveiled the statue by Fredda Brilliant. Harold Wilson had been most helpful.

In 1970 on the occasion of the birthday of Jawaharlal Nehru the League organized a dinner for Edward Heath, then the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, prior to his visit to India.

I may mention that since Independence four Prime Ministers have spoken on the League's platform, which would have been quite inconceivable in the past. The League has now received respectability. but alas, it lacks the heady feeling which it had during the struggle for Independence.

Lord Sorenson died in 1971, and Indira Gandhi sent the following message to Lady Sorenson:

In Lord Sorenson's passing away India loses a great friend from the days of the freedom struggle. He has championed our cause with eloquence and dedication. His concern and work was for the suppressed people of all lands.

I was looking forward to meeting Lord Sorenson later this month in London. I believe he was to have presided over a meeting of Indian organisations under the auspices of the India League. A wide circle of friends all over the world mourn his death. You have my deepest sympathy.

For forty years Sorenson had been a great stalwart of the League and was an extremely great loss to us. I was asked to take his place and accepted the Chairmanship, which I have occupied since. Dr Tarapanda Basu became the Secretary, and he brought enormous energy and drive to this job.

Bridget Tunnard, who had started working voluntarily for the League in the early 1940s, giving all her spare time and energy to India's cause and the League, died early in 1971. Krishna Menon paid a tribute to 'the dedicated spirit to whom I and we all owe so much and who rendered over quarter of a century sincere and devoted service to the League and auxiliaries. I have lost an affectionate friend and colleague.'

Krishna Menon carried on his activities, travelling by air to the United Kingdom and back to India in defiance of his doctor's strict instructions, and died in 1974, bringing an epoch of the India League to an end.

Three years after the death of Krishna Menon, in the year 1977, a bust of Krishna Menon was installed in Fitzroy Square, London, by the League with the co-operation of the Camden Council. This bust was immediately opposite Mahatma Gandhi Hall (the Indian YMCA) which was founded on the initiative of Krishna Menon at the time he was High Commissioner in London.

The statue was unveiled by Michael Foot, MP, Lord President of the Council, an old friend of Krishna Menon, and over the years a very reliable friend of India. (He was on the Executive of the India League in the middle of the 1930s.) At the meeting also was the Lord Chancellor, Lord Elwyn-Jones, who paid his tribute, as did Earl Listowel and the High Commissioner for India, B.K. Nehru, Mrs Lena Jeger, the local MP, also spoke, as did Dr K.S. Shelvankar, former Indian Ambassador to Vietnam and to Moscow. Sir John Tilney represented Mrs Thatcher. It was a formidable platform. Many old friends of Krishna were in the gathering, and messages of tribute were sent by the two Prime Ministers, James Callaghan of the United Kingdom, and Indira Gandhi, both former activists in the India League. It was a tribute to Krishna, but also a tribute to the League and was a solid recollection of the co-operation of the British and Indian people in the struggle for the freedom of India.

Messages were also received from two former Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Harold Wilson and Edward Heath, and from Jennie Lee and Y.B. Chavan and P.N. Haksar, also, Mr Lalit Sen:

This is not a biography of Krishna Menon, but it is essentially to give more details of this remarkable person in relation to the activities and record of the League.

Krishna was completely dedicated to the freedom of India. He was little interested in material things and looking after himself. His meals consisted of toast and tomato soup and tea, of which he drank great quantities. He suffered from ill-health for almost the whole of his life, but his powerful spirit could override his bodily frailties. His mind was brilliant and his satire biting. In consequence he sometimes spoke too rapidly, and he was somewhat difficult to follow. As a pamphleteer and writer he was cogent, powerful and radical.

Three people had a powerful influence upon him. The first was Annie Besant, under whose auspices he first came to London and who introduced him to politics and to the Commonwealth of India League, as it was then. Secondly, Professor Harold Laski whom he met when he was at the London School of Economics. Harold Laski was himself a very powerful supporter of the India League, and he tutored Krishna in politics and the history of politics. Thirdly, Krishna Menon's friendship with Jawaharlal Nehru commenced in 1935, and this is shown clearly in the correspondence in the Teen Murti Library. There was a contribution and cross-fertilization of ideas. Both had similar views of India; both were sympathetic to the more radical side of Congress, and this friendship continued right until the death of Nehru.

It was a personal friendship as well as a political one and subsisted throughout Krishna's position as High Commissioner, and whilst he was the representative of India at the United Nations and also whilst he was Minister.

There was a great and long friendship, occasionally turbulent, between Krishna and Reginald Sorenson, subsequently Lord Sorenson, extending over forty years. Sorenson was in the first place the Parliamentary Secretary of the League, asking questions, speaking in the House and at Party Conferences, and also organizing other Members of Parliament in the India League, and eventually he became the Chairman of the League. There were some occasional difficulties between Krishna and Sorenson, but I am glad to say that when Sorenson died they had reconciled themselves and resumed their terms of great friendship.

To complete the story of the League, Tara Basu died, alas, in 1981. He was a very great loss to the League. In the meantime the secretarial duties are being carried out by S.N. Gourisaria, who is the Treasurer and Acting Secretary, and Zeff Carrasco, the Administrative Secretary, especially in relation to the India Club, and the League carries on.

I have mentioned many names of prominent people who have assisted the work of the League. I would mention also Jim Griffiths, MP, Arthur

Greenwood, MP and his son Tony (Lord Greenwood), James Cameron, Sybil Thorndike, Lewis Casson, and Nye Bevan, MP, and especially Jennie Lee, who retained her interest and support long after Nye's death. I would also mention Harold Davies, now Lord Davies.

There were a substantial number of Indian people, some of whom are well-known in India; for instance, Feroze Gandhi, who worked actively in the League, where I believe he first met Indira, though they were married subsequently in India. It would have been a good thing if I could have mentioned all the people who helped, but I am afraid this cannot be done in this chapter.

In conclusion, this is a short chapter. I believe that the India League deserves a complete history as part of the History of India. I express the hope that this is embarked upon soon.

It remains for me to thank Mr Kumar and the staff of the Nehru Library in New Delhi for their great help to my wife and myself and also to Dr S. Shelvankar, Mary Shelvankar (formerly Mary Baxter) and Iqbal Singh for their help and advice.

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